Monks and Monasteries of the EGYPTIAN DESERTS

OTTO MEINARDUS

Dr. Otto F. A. Meinardus is a native of Hamburg, Germany. He received his education at Hamburg University, the University of London, England; Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri (B.D.); Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts (S.T.M., Ph.D.), and Harvard University.

Dr. Meinardus has been the pastor of churches in Christchurch (New Zealand), Adelaide (Australia), and Peabody, Massachusetts. After his arrival in Cairo in 1956 to serve as associate professor of philosophy at the American University at Cairo, he began an intensive first-hand study of the Coptic Church, and Coptic monasticism in particular. He has visited the historic Christian sites throughout Egypt, and has become known among the Copts as one of the foremost Western authorities on the subject. He is a Fellow of the Institute of Coptic Studies in Cairo (F.I.C.S.), where he serves as a lecturer in addition to his work at the American University.

The author is a frequent contributor to the scholarly journals devoted to Coptic studies. He has completed a study of the travels of the Holy Family in Egypt according to oral and written traditions and legends that have been handed down through the centuries, and presently he is engaged in compiling a guide book to ancient and modern Christian Egypt.

Dr. Meinardus, his wife and their two children reside in Ma'adi, a suburb of Cairo, where Dr. Meinardus serves as pastor of the Ma'adi Community Church.

A Gift of
**Dr. and Mrs.
Ira Jay Martin, III**
to the
Baptist Student Union
Berea College

R. KOMEL
Alessandria

**Baptist Seminary of Kentucky
Library**

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/monksmonasteries0000otto

Monks and Monasteries
# of the
Egyptian Deserts

OTTO F. A. MEINARDUS, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, The American University at Cairo
Fellow of the Institute of Coptic Studies, Cairo.

PUBLISHED BY

The American University at Cairo Press
CAIRO, EGYPT, U.A.R., 1961

Baptist Seminary of Kentucky
Library

136
.M4
1961

© COPYRIGHT 1961 BY
THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY AT CAIRO PRESS
All Rights Reserved

Anbâ Kîrillus VI

Εν ἐρημίαις πλανώμενοι καὶ ὄρεσιν καὶ σπηλαίοις καὶ ταῖς ὀπαῖς τῆς γῆς·

They wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

Ep. Hebrews XI : 36b

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page
PREFACE 3

INTRODUCTION 7
1. Pre-Christian Asceticism 7
2. The Ascetic Element in Christianity 9

ST. ANTONY THE ASCETE 11
1. The Cult of St. Antony 11
2. The Vita of St. Antony 17
3. Dair al-Maimûn 21
4. The Influence of St. Antony 23

DAIR ANBA ANTUNIUS 29
1. The Beginning of the Monastery 31
2. Copts and Greeks 34
3. From the Eighth to the 14th Century 36
4. European Pilgrims Rediscover the Monastery 40
5. The 17th and 18th Century Travellers 46
6. The 19th and 20th Century Travellers 56
7. The Encroachment of the World 69
8. Modern Asceticism at St. Antony's Monastery 71
9. The Monastery in the Middle of the 20th Century 77
10. The Caves of the Thebaid 85

DAIR ANBA BULA 89
1. The Monastery and its Saint 91
2. The Early Pilgrims 95
3. The 17th and 18th Century Travellers 97
4. The 19th and 20th Century Travellers 101
5. The Monastery and its Monks in the Middle of the 20th Century 108

THE VALLEY OF THE WADI 'N-NATRUN 117

DAIR AL-BARAMUS 123
1. The Foundation of the Monastery 125
2. Heresies and Destructions 127
3. From the 11th to the 16th Century 133
4. The 17th and 18th Century Travellers 136
5. The 19th and 20th Century Travellers 140
6. The Monastery in the Middle of the 20th Century 150
7. Anbâ Kîrillus VI 156

Page
DAIR ABU MAQAR 159
1. Abû Maqâr and the Foundation of the Monastery 161
2. The Council of Chalcedon and the Story of Hilaria 166
3. The Patriarchal Residence 168
4. The Centre of Ecclesiastical Prestige 170
5. From the 12th to the 16th Century 180
6. The 16th and 17th Century Travellers 183
7. The 19th and 20th Century Travellers 192
8. The Monastery in the Middle of the 20th Century 204

DAIR ANBA BISHOI 211
1. The Life of Anbâ Bishoî 213
2. The Sacks 215
3. From the 11th to the 16th Century 218
4. The 17th and 18th Century Travellers 221
5. The 17th, 18th, and 19th Century Cartographers 225
6. The 19th and 20th Century Travellers 227
7. The Monastery in the Middle of the 20th Century 236

DAIR AS-SURIAN 239
1. St. John Kame 241
2. The Gaianite Heresy 244
3. The Beginnings of the Monastery of the Syrians 246
4. The Growth of the Monastery 247
5. The Decline and Revival of the Monastery 249
6. The 17th and 18th Century Travellers 251
7. The 19th and 20th Century Travellers 255
8. The Monastery in the Middle of the 20th Century 272

DAIR AL-MUHARRAQ 283
1. The Holy Family in Egypt 285
2. The Founder of Coenobitic Monasticism 287
3. Several Hundred Years of Silence 289
4. The Monastery in the 19th and 20th Century 295
5. Some Recent Developments 297
6. The Buildings of the Monastery 301
7. The Social and Educational Services of the Monastery .. 304

DAIR ANBA SAMWIL 309
1. Early Monasticism in the Fayyûm 311
2. From the Seventh to the 17th Century 312
3. The 19th and 20th Century Travellers 316
4. The Location of the Monastery 321

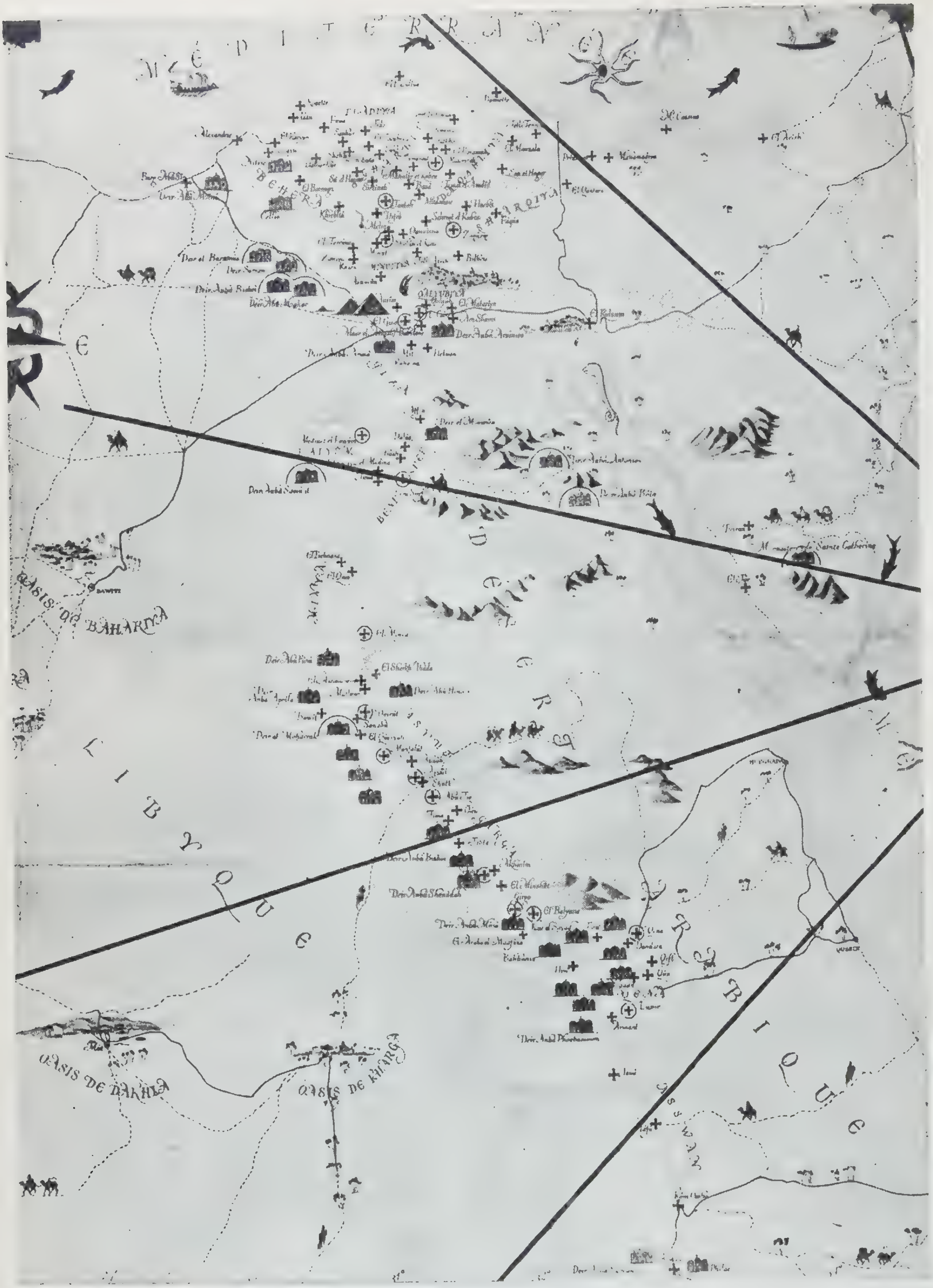
Page
5. The Monastery in the Middle of the 20th Century 322
6. The Monks of the Monastery 326
7. The Cave of St. Samuel 332
8. Bait at-Takrîs li Hidmat al-Kirâzah 334

DAIR SITT DIMIANAH 337

DAIR ABU MINA 349
1. The Life of Abû Mînâ 351
2. The Shrine of Abû Mînâ 354
3. The Discovery of the Shrine of St. Menas 365
4. The New Monastery 368

THE DEPENDENCIES 370
1. The Dependency of Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs 371
2. The Dependency of Dair Anbâ Bûlâ 373
3. The Dependency of Dair al-Barâmûs 374
4. The Dependency of Dair Abû Maqâr 375
5. The Dependency of Dair Anbâ Bishoî 376
6. The Dependency of Dair as-Surîân 377
7. The Izbawiya 378
8. The Dependency of Dair Anbâ Samwîl 378

EPILOGUE 380
System of Transliteration 382
Appendix I. The Theological School of Monks 383
Appendix II. Motives for Which Men Become Monks in Egypt 384
Appendix III. The Appointments in Coptic Monasticism .. 388
Appendix IV. Certain Roles Which Have Been Assumed in Coptic Monasticism 391
Bibliography 401


OASIS DE BAHARIYA
LIBYQUE
OASIS DE DAKHLA
OASIS DE KHARGA
ARABIQUE
Monastere de Sainte Catherine

The ancient monasteries and churches of Egypt. Monasteries still in use are marked with a semi-circle.

Preface

THOSE who live in Egypt have a different understanding of the desert from those who live in Europe or America. In some places of the world the desert has become a testing ground for nuclear energy, and a variety of means of destruction are annually tried out as to their effectiveness in killing men. But, here in Egypt the desert is still considered by many a blessing of God, for it is the desert that has provided from time immemorial a testing ground for the souls of men. Jesus Christ, Himself, was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert to be temped by the devil, and He abode there for forty days and forty nights. Go to the desert for food and drink and you will describe it as a barren waste. Go to the desert to listen to the Voice of God and you will receive insight, understanding and wisdom. To be a desert, it has to be silent, it has to be apart, it has to be different. Thus the desert conveys a picture, waterless and featureless, yet overwhelming to the senses.

I have visited various deserts in Egypt, the Desert of Scetis (Wâdî 'n-Natrûn), the Desert of the Wâdî 'Arabah, the Desert of al-Qalamûn, the Desert of Maryût, and it was there that I discovered people who awakened my interest. Some of them were very ordinary people, others appeared strange, yet there were others again who radiated a love, a concern and a spirituality that could only have resulted from the impact of the desert. Thus I repeated my visits, spending days and nights with those whose life was formed by the desert. It is to them that this volume is dedicated, for they were the people who provided the impetus to study the many books written by and about them.

The importance of a study of this kind in the middle of the 20th century lies in the fact that, as in the days of old, the Coptic leaders, the patriarch, the metropolitans and the bishops are recruited from the desert monks. Thus it is no oversimplification to say that the state of the monasteries reflects in some measure the state of the Church. This is particularly relevant in our days on account of the action of the 115th Patriarch, Anbâ Yûsâb II, who applied officially for membership in the World Council of Churches. At the second World Council of Churches Conference in Evanston, Ill., in 1954, three Copts represented the ancient See of St. Mark, Professor Azîz Surîâl 'Atiyah, Abûnâ Salîb Surîâl, parish priest of Gizâh, and Abûnâ Makârî of the Monastery of the Syrians. Since then, the Coptic Church has been represented at ecumenical gatherings by Abûnâ Makârî as-Surîânî, who in July, 1956, attended the Church and Society Conference in Herrenalb, Karlsruhe, Germany, and the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches in Geliateto, Hungary. In 1958, the desert monk again spoke for his Church at the consultation of the Church and Society Conference in Odense, Denmark, and at the working committee of the same section in Nyborg, Denmark, as well as at the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches.

In the field of Christian Education, the Coptic Church cooperates with the World Council of Christian Education and Sunday School Association. Abûnâ Makârî and Mr. 'Abd al-Masîh Bishârah (now Abûnâ Makârîûs as-Surîânî) attended the conference of the World Council of Christian Education in 1957 held in Beirut. The ecumenical cooperation on the part of the Coptic Church should make a study of its history with special reference to its monasteries particularly important to readers who are concerned with the Ecumenical Movement.

This volume ought to be read and considered merely as an introduction to the subject. This means that I do not claim in any way to have exhausted the literary sources, for many documents, manuscripts and books were not accessible to me. Furthermore, my whole undertaking suffers from the fact that I am neither a church-historian nor a Copt. This means, that like so many Westerners, I have written about something in which I am not personally involved.

Furthermore, I have limited myself merely to a study of the inhabited desert monasteries. For a thorough study of Coptic desert monasticism from its beginnings to the present day in all its various forms and expressions requires such a profound knowledge of Coptic archaeology, history and theology that it would seem to me to be the work of a team, rather than that of one individual.

As to the historical veracity of the material presented, it might be helpful to point to the utter relativity of what is commonly understood by history. For historical writings describe events which others remember and project upon paper. Therefore, it is always difficult to distinguish later between projected memory and projected imagination, realizing that imagination is one of the creative aspects of our mind. I do not claim to be the judge to determine where actual history ends and imagination commences. This every reader will have to do for himself. I have presented some material of the history of the Coptic monasteries, but I do not vouch for its historical veracity.

For easier and more consistent reading, all dates in the text have been converted into those of the Christian era, Anno Domini. For in

Egypt there are altogether four calendar systems in use; the Coptic, the Islamic, the Julian-Gregorian and the Gregorian. To begin with the Islamic one, the Muslim era commences on the 15th or the 16th of July, 622 A.D. This date does not exactly coincide with the date of Muhammad's migration from Mecca to Medina, for it was fixed by 'Umar in such a way that the year begins in Muharram. The Coptic Church begins its era on the 29th of August, 284 A.D., which is termed the "Era of the Martyrs" (A.M.) and which commemorates the martyrs who suffered and died for the Christian faith during the Diocletian persecution. According to reckoning by the Gregorian Calendar, the Coptic Year begins on September 11th, or on the 12th in Leap Years. Thus the "Era of the Martyrs" marks the official beginning of Coptic history. The Julian-Gregorian Calendar is used by the Greek Orthodox. For immovable feasts, the date is according to the Gregorian reckoning, but for the movable feasts of Easter, Ascension Day and Pentecost the Julian Calendar is followed. The Gregorian Calendar resulted from a correction of the Julian Calendar by Aloysius Lilius and was introduced into the Western Church by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582.

As to the arrangement, each monastery has been dealt with separately so as to enable the reader to trace the history of the monastery throughout the centuries. This method has, however, inevitably produced some repetition, as well as some arbitrary selections of material, especially in the case of the four monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. The study of the Cult of St. Antony has been included so as to relate the international, intercultural and ecumenical impact of the hermit.

I am greatly indebted to the directors and librarians of the following institutes and libraries who have helped me in locating the numerous volumes from which I have quoted : Bibliothèque du Centre d'Etudes Orientales de la Custodie Franciscaine de Terre-Sainte, Mousky ; Bibliothèque, Institut Dominicain d'Etudes Orientales, Abbassiya ; Bibliothèque, Institut du Désert, Egypt, Matariah ; Bibliothèque de la Société d'Archéologie Copte, Gîzah ; Bibliothèque de la Société Entomologique d'Egypte, Cairo ; Bibliothèque de la Société de Géographie d'Egypte, Cairo ; Collège de la Sainte Famille (S.J.), Faggalah ; Dar al-Kutub, Cairo ; Deutsches Archaeologisches Institut, Żamalek ; Schweizerisches Institut für Aegyptische Bauforschung und Altertumskunde, Zamalek ; Library of the Coptic Museum, Old Cairo ; Institute of Coptic Studies, Abbassiya; Institut d'Egypte, Cairo ; Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, Cairo ; Library of the American University at Cairo ; Library of the Gayer Anderson Museum, Cairo ; Library of Professor K.A.C. Creswell, A.U.C. ; Library of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo ; Library of the Coptic Patriarchate, Cairo; Library of Dair as-Surîân, Wadî 'n-Natrûn and the Archive of the Al-Hilal Publishing House, Cairo.

In addition, I want to express my sincere gratitude to the American Friends of the Middle East and the Social Research Center of the American University at Cairo. These two institutions have assisted me to carry out the many field trips into the deserts of Egypt. Their encouragement was of assistance in completing the study.

Furthermore, as in duty bound, I desire to acknowledge my debt of great obligation to Dr. O.H.E. KHS-Burmester in what relates to the history and liturgiology of the Eastern Orthodox Churches in general, and of the Coptic Orthodox Church in particular. From his encyclopaedic knowledge in this field I have greatly profited. Dr. Burmester has most carefully read through and re-read through the manuscript and proofs, and has offered many valuable suggestions and has extirpated a number of errors. However, I must clearly state, that I alone am responsible for any that may still be found in this work. Dr. Burmester and I have spent many months together, studying, translating and discussing the material under hand, much of which now appears in print for the first time. Dr. Burmester's scholarly persistence and encouragement has been a constant source of inspiration to me to achieve this work.

In conclusion, I wish to add a word of gratitude to Abûnâ Makârî as-Surîânî, Secretary to His Holiness Anbâ Kîrillus VI. He has made important suggestions for which I am deeply grateful.

Feast of the Ascension
of Our Lord,
May 26th, 1960.
Cairo.

Otto Meinardus.

Introduction

1. Pre-Christian Asceticism

A wealth of literature, covering a period of almost 1600 years, concerns itself with the very beginnings of the monastic movement, which once transplanted on European soil influenced so much the life of the Christian Church. It is true that pre-Christian ascetic communities existed in Egypt. Weingarten[1] writing about the origin of monasticism points to the existence of the Katachoi, the recluses associated with the Serapeum at Memphis during the days of the Ptolemies. Though our knowledge of the Katachoi is limited, we know that they used to live in individual cells for a certain period of time after which they would return to the world.

The priestly ascetics at Heliopolis in the first century B.C. are another parallel development of similar religious attitudes. Renouncing all ordinary occupations, they devoted themselves to a life of contemplation and prayer, and the account of the mode of life followed in any of their societies would almost exactly describe the kind of ascetic life of the early Christian communities.[2] But this fellowship of ascetic priests had been dissolved about three centuries before St. Antony decided to withdraw to the desert. Another group devoted to contemplation was the community of the Gymnosophists of Thebes in the first century A.D. Their asceticism insisted upon the abstinence from meat, from the desires of the flesh and from envy.

There is little doubt that the ideals of the Christian anchorites were to some extent anticipated in Judaism. The Nazarites,[3] for example, were individuals who bound themselves to the observance of particular ascetic practices. The same is true about the Rechabites, who seem to have been a tribal group committing themselves to the ascetic ideal. The Chasidim ha-Risbonim of the Maccabean period also congregated in small associations and devoted themselves to ascetic and pious behaviour.[4]

---

(1) Weingarten, "Ursprung des Mönchtums," 32.

(2) Evelyn White, *The Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn*, II, 6.

(3) Eichrodt, *Theologie des Alten Testamentes*, I, 159.

(4) Wach, *Sociology of Religion*, 178.

The most interesting pre-Christian monastic community on Egyptian soil is the group of persons known as Therapeutae and Therapeutrides. [5] Philo, [6] after having mentioned the Essenes, [7] whom he praised as an exemplification of the practical life, discusses the contemplative virtues of the Therapeutae. These men "profess an art of medicine more excellent than that in general use in the cities." [8] Though they may have lived in many places "there is the greatest number of such men in Egypt... and especially around Alexandria." [9]

Now as to their mode of life, Philo explains that "they did not live near to one another as men do in cities, for immediate neighbourhood to others would be a troublesome and unpleasant thing to men who have conceived an admiration for, and have determined to devote themselves to, solitude ... and they are accustomed to pray twice every day, at morning and at evening ..... and the interval between morning and evening is by them devoted wholly to meditation on and to practice of virtue, for they take up the sacred scriptures and philosophies concerning them ...... on the seventh day they all come together as if to meet in a sacred assembly, and they sit down in order according to their ages with all becoming gravity ...... and no one of them may take meat or drink before the setting of the sun, since they judge that the work of philosophising is one which is worthy of light, but that the care of the necessities of the body is suitable only to darkness." [10]

It goes without saying that this description resembles in many ways the accounts we have of the early desert fathers. Yet, this is a good illustration to substantiate our claim regarding parallel developments. The Therapeutae who lived in the first century A.D. had neither direct nor indirect relationship with the Christian asceticism that was to follow in the third and fourth centuries. [11]

---

(5) Yonge, *Philo*. "A treatise on a contemplative life," IV, 1 - 20.

(6) Philo was a Jewish philosopher, born c. 20 — 10 B.C. who appears to have spent his whole life in Alexandria.

(7) The Essenes were a Jewish sect who succeeded the Chasidim of the Maccabean times. The recent discoveries at Qumran, an Essene Community, have thrown a great deal of light upon the religious and ethical attitudes of the Essene sect.

(8) Philo, *op. cit.*, 1.

(9) Philo, *op. cit.*, 6.

(10) Philo, *op. cit.*, 7, 8.

(11) It is most unlikely that either St. Antony or any of the Desert Fathers had any knowledge of the works of Philo Judaeus. On the other hand, Eusebius (260 - 340 A.D.) Bishop of Caesarea, and ecclesiastical historian, sees in the Therapeutae Christians, who were converted to the Christian faith by St. Mark the Evangelist.

2. The Ascetic Element in Christianity

To comprehend the scope of the present work, it is necessary for the reader to know from the very outset what the Egyptian monks understand by the term 'Monastic Life'. The monastic life they call the 'angelic life', and those who attain to the highest degree of monasticism are clothed with the *schema* which they call the 'angelic garment'. To become as the angels of heaven and to live accordingly necessitates the mortification of the desires of the flesh, the withdrawal from the world and its vanities and the development of spirituality. Thus equipped with this other-worldliness, the monk approaches to the state of those spiritual beings whom we call angels, and can in this wise attain to a fuller contemplation and adoration of God.

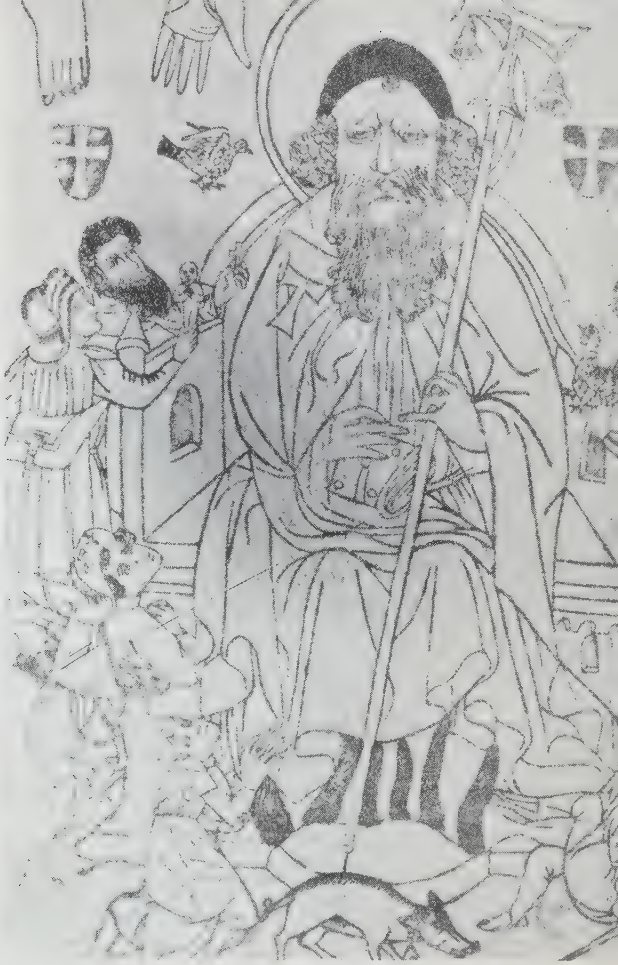
There is no question that monasticism in its Christian forms came to birth in the Orient. Both the anchoritic or solitary and the coenobitic or communal life found their first expressions in the land of the Pharaohs. The question of the originality of Christian monasticism has been debated and the historians and sociologists of religion have accumulated large quantities of material that could be used to defend certain interrelationships between ancient dualistic philosophies that inspired the monastic religious expressions. In answer to those who feel that every movement is somehow related to other previous or contemporary movements let us point to the rather frequent historical and sociological phenomenon of parallel developments. Thus, unless proved clearly, it seems to be unjustifiable to see in similar religious expressions at different times and places necessarily the objects of inspiration and determination. Historically speaking, both the Essenes[12] and St. John the Baptist provided Primitive Christianity with the ascetic impetus that was to play such a considerable role in its later history. The person of St. John the Baptist, wearing only the simplest garments and living on honey and locusts, may well be considered to be the historical link between pre-Christian (Essene) and Christian asceticism.

The picture of Christ portrayed by the Primitive Church displays many radical ascetic tendencies. That the ascetic sayings of Jesus attracted so much attention among the disciples and apostles becomes

---

(12) For a discussion on the relationship of Essene asceticism and Christian asceticism, *cf.* Allegro, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origin of Christianity*, 141 - 165.

evident from their writings, as seen in the Epistles, Gospels and Apocryphal literature. A variety of ascetic expressions is found in the voluntary communalism of the Christian Sect as described in *Acts* 4 : 32, the critical appraisal of matrimony in *I Corinthians* 7 : 8 ff, or the emphasis laid upon virginity regarding the 144,000 in the *Apocalypse* 14 : 4. By the end of the first century A.D. asceticism was a well established practice in the Christian Church, and in the fourth century it became an organized institution.



Anonymous, Fifteenth Century
Bavarian Collection, Munich

St. Antony the Ascete

1. The Cult of St. Antony

THE personality of St. Antony is important for our study because he is the prototype of Coptic asceticism in particular and of Christian monasticism in general. It is interesting to discover to what an extent the life, the attitudes, the words and works of this great Hermit of the desert have influenced, and still influence the lives of the desert fathers, be they anchorites[1] or coenobitic monks.[2]

---

(1) Anchorite from ἀναχωρεῖν, to withdraw or retire.

(2) Coenobitic from κοινὸς, common; and βίος, life.

St. Antony possesses a certain fascination which has drawn all kinds of people to a study of his life. His impact has been truly international and intercultural, and though he rightfully belongs to the Alexandrian Patriarchate, the Church Universal has been greatly enriched by the example of this one solitary monk. How many great, noble, and inspiring lives have been lived of which no one has ever heard or read a word, and from which nobody has ever profited. It is fortunate and also important for the development of Coptic and Christian monasticism at large, that a man of the stature of St. Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, turned his attention to the writing of a biography of St. Antony. Thus in a sense, St. Athanasius fulfilled the same function in relation to St. Antony as St. Mark, or the Evangelist's original source material, did in relation to Christ. For neither Christ nor St. Antony engaged in any literary activity of their own.[3] Their personalities, ideas and attitudes were to be pictured by others. In the case of St. Antony, the biographer was a man who not only had received a liberal education, but who also was well instructed in the Scriptures and in Greek learning.[4] More important than that, St. Athanasius was the first episcopal supporter and promoter of the monastic idea. His *Vita Antonii* was purposely addressed to the West,[5] where it produced a lasting influence.[6] Theologians like St. Jerome and St. Gregory Nazianzen show acquaintance with St. Athanasius' *Vita*, and the demand for information about the great hermit, especially by the Western Church, must have prompted Evagrius, about twenty years after the

---

(3) The only incident recorded of Jesus writing is found in *John* 8: 6 - 8. It appears from the *Vita Antonii* by St. Athanasius, that the Desert Hermit possessed neither any book learning nor the ability to read or to write. His correspondence with Emperor Constantine may well have been written by an assistant and amanuensis. An extensive *Corpus Antonii* exists in Arabic, containing letters, regulations and exhortations. According to Baumstark, the collection of letters is the literary product of St. Antony's disciple Ammon. It is probable that numerous letters have existed in Coptic. Abû 'l-Barakat relates that he knew of twenty letters of St. Antony that were kept in Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs. *Cf.* Graf. *Gesch. d. christl. arab. Lit.*, I, 456 - 9.

(4) His theological learning and profound spiritual insight can be well appreciated in his discourses at the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea. *Cf.* Stanley, *Lectures on the History of the Eastern Church*, 52 - 246.

(5) St. Athanasius had spent some time in the West when exiled from Alexandria. It is probable that he had been requested by Christians to relate something about the typical characteristics of Christianity in Egypt.

(6) It is generally believed that St. Athanasius began writing his biography of St. Antony in 357 A.D., this would be within a year or two of his death.

Saint's death, to translate the Life of St. Antony into Latin. We hear that by the end of the fourth century the life of the Saint was read even in faraway Gaul.[7] In Book VIII of his *Confessions*, St. Augustine relates how he was stirred by the reading of the life of St. Antony. "For I hear of Antony, that coming in during the reading of the Gospel, he received the admonition, as if what was being read was spoken to him: 'Go sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me' ..... and by such oracle he was forthwith converted unto Thee."[8] It was this Divine Command that had moved not only St. Antony but also St. Augustine. As a matter of fact, we find that the desert movement, early Catholic scholasticism, and the practical concern of Christian charity as expressed by St. Francis of Assisi were all inspired by the same Word.[9]

St. Antony's motives, his struggles, his strength have been a recurrent theme in the studies of depth-psychologists, anthropologists, painters and writers. Why was a novelist like Gustave Flaubert inspired by the spirit of St. Antony?

A little after his return to France[10] from a voyage to the East, he bought a painting of St. Anthony by Jacques Callot which was strongly influenced by the masterpiece of Peter Brueghel. Flaubert hung this painting in his study at Croisset, near Rouen, where it remained until his death. Sitting in front of this picture, he composed his famous work on the hermit. For 18 months he worked day and night. It was during this time that he wrote his famous letter to Louise Colet in January 1853. "O heureux temps de Saint Antoine, où êtes-vous? J'écrivais là, avec mon moi tout entier."[11] Again and again during his literary career he turned to the *Tentation de Saint Antoine,* until at length it was completed in 1874.[12] The work of Flaubert exerted a great influence upon a large number of French artists, among them Felician Rops who painted a *Tentation de Saint Antoine* in 1878, Paul Cézanne, and in particular Henri Rivière who produced fourteen paintings dedicated to

---

(7) Meyer, *St. Athanasius : The Life of St. Anthony*. 14.

(8) Pusey (transl.), *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, 147.

(9) *Matthew*, 19 : 21.

(10) Flaubert had visited Egypt between 1849-51. *Cf.* Flaubert, *Voyage en Orient*.

(11) Chaleur, "Le Culte de Saint Antoine," 39.

(12) Flaubert's three texts of *La Tentation de Saint Antoine* appeared successively in 1849, 1856, and 1874. It is interesting to notice that Flaubert's attitudes towards the world have been compared with those of an ascetic monk. *Enc. Brit. IX*, 361.

the Temptation of St. Antony, which in their turn renewed an interest in the Antonian theme in modern literature.

Beginning with the idealistic art of the early Christian era, passing through Roman sculpture, Gothic art, the paintings of the early, middle and late Renaissance to modern, and even ultra-modern times, there has not been a single period or a school of art which has not glorified the various themes of the life of St. Antony. (13)

St. Antony's popularity increased in the West from the beginning of the 11th century, especially after the foundation of the French Order of St. Antony. (14) And as in the case of so many other saints, St. Antony's name was also used to identify a medieval disease. One of the most widespread epidemics from the ninth to the fourteenth century was that called "St. Antony's fire." (15)

The brothers Huybrecht and Jan van Eyck, "the oldest and most remarkable of this race of artists," painted St. Antony in the midst of hermits. Lucas van Leyden, the famous Dutch master, painted a *Temptation of St. Antony* and *St. Antony and St. Paul the Theban*, and Victor de Pise, one of the painters of the North Italian Renaissance, shows the great desert hermit in one of his famous stained-glass windows. Pinturichio (Bernardine di Betto di Biago), the great master of the Umbrian school was inspired by St. Antony, and projected his impression upon the canvas. Paolo Veronese, the name given to Paolo Caliari, an Italian painter of the Venetian school, painted an altar piece of the *Temptation of St. Antony* which has recently been identified with a picture in the museum of Caen. One of the more charming pictures of the hermit is the work of Carlo Maratta of the Roman school ; Giuseppe Ribera of the Spanish-Neapolitan school, as well as Guido Reni, the master of the Italian eclectic baroque school, expressed their inspiration of the Saint in the form of paintings. In Spain the person of St. Antony inspired Francisco de Zurbaran and Diego Rodriguez de Silva Velazquez.[16] The latter painted, on royal commission for the hermitage of Buen Retiro, his famous *St. Antony the Abbot and St. Paul the Hermit.* Albrecht Dürer and Lucas Cranach represented him in an attitude of prayer and contemplation, while David Teniers and Jacques Callot captured the Saint in his temptations.[17] In the ancient Antonian convent in Issenheim there is the famous picture of St. Antony by the Alsacian painter Schöngauer. Whether it be the St. Antony triptych by Hieronymous van Aeken (Jerome Bosch) in the museum at Brussels, or the *Temptation of St. Antony* by Joachim de Patinir in the gallery in Madrid or the pictures of Matthias Gruenewald, Peter Brueghel or others ; the hermit has inspired innumerable works. The literary and artistic attraction of this simple monk in the Western world is one of the strange phenomena that still demands some explanation. In the monumental Antonian anthology *Antonius Magnus Eremita* published in commemoration of the 1600 years anniversary of the Saint's death, Guy Ferrari informs us that the Princeton Art Index records between certain and disputed examples, 302 different representations of St. Antony the Great. Of these, 57 are dated from the 13th century, and before. The remaining 245 are from the 14th or early 15th century. The great majority of the 14th century examples are of Italian origin. Every textbook dealing with the history of the Christian Church has some discussion of the influence of St. Antony upon Christian asceticism, mysticism and monasticism. The growth of traditions and legends internationalized the desert Saint, especially during the Middle Ages. In France, where certain pious French people believe him to be buried, he found himself the patron-saint of grave-diggers, basket makers and weavers, bell ringers and firemen, gunsmiths and glovers.[18]

---

(13) Chaleur, *op. cit.*, 31 -41.

(14) The Order of St. Antony (black habit with a blue Tau-cross and a clochette) was founded by Gaston de Dauphiné in 1095 A.D., and was known as the 'Hospital Brothers of St. Antony'. The order was absorbed in 1771 by the Order of Malta.

(15) The disease existed in several forms. In one form the abdominal viscera were affected, and the death of the victim was fortunately speedy. In its common form the disease affected the extremities and this was succeeded by a torturing burning sensation. The monastic order of St. Antony was devoted to the care of sufferers from ergotism. Haggard, *Devils, Drugs and Doctors*, 224 - 227. Hospitals dedicated to St. Antony exist to this day in Lucens, Neyruz, Cossonay, Coire and other places in France and Switzerland.

St. Antony's relationship to the Christians of Western Europe, especially those of France, may be explained by the legend recorded in the *Ethiopian Synaxarium* according to which the desert Saint

---

(16) A reproduction of the painting by Velazquez was presented to the monks of the Antonian Monastery by Mr. Cogordan in 1901. Cogordan, *Relation du voyage fait au Couvent de St. Antoine*, 71.

(17) Ternois, "Un Dessin de Jacques Callot pour la Tentation de Saint Antoine", *Musées de France,* VII, September 1950, 172 - 179.

(18) Queffelec, *Saint Anthony of the Desert*, 250.

miraculously visited the Frankish country of Barkinon. "And the report of Anthony was also heard by a Frankish king, namely the King of the country of Barkinon, which was situated at a distance of seven months' journey from the country of Egypt. And the Frankish king sent unto Saint Abba Anthony, saying, 'I beseech and entreat thee by the Passion of our Lord Christ, to come to us, and bless us, and all our city, and our army'. When Anthony heard these words he was exceedingly sorry because the king said : 'by the Passion of our Lord Christ'. And Anthony stood up and prayed, saying, 'I beseech Thee, O my Lord Jesus Christ, to do Thy will in me. If thou wishest me to go to the Frankish country of Barkinon, give me a sign of Thy Will'. Whilst he was saying these words, behold a cloud of light appeared, and it carried him and brought him during the night to the Frankish country. And the king rejoiced in him with a great joy, and all his soldiers and people likewise rejoiced, and they brought to him those who were sick and the blind and the lame, and he healed them by his prayer forthwith. And he dwelt with them for seven months, teaching them the way of righteousness and life, and he arrayed many thousands in the garb of the monastic life. And each Sunday the cloud of light bore him away and brought him to his monastery, and he went among his sons and comforted them, for on the following day that cloud would bear him away, and take him back to that Frankish land." [19]

For our purpose, the life of St. Antony is significant, because his attitude towards the institutions of the "world", his words and his way of life were and still are the main determinants for the kind of life Coptic monks used to lead and still lead to-day. The *Vita Antonii,* as presented to us either by St. Athanasius or by Palladius in his celebrated *Lausiac History,* is an ideal life. This does not mean that it is either historically or psychologically incorrect. Data and sayings are recorded for the purpose of instruction, inspiration and imitation. This is to be expected since both *Vitae* were written by ecclesiastics who were profoundly sympathetic to their subject. At the same time, however, there is no doubt that, voluntarily or involuntarily, consciously or unconsciously, the biographers idealized their Saint, so that he became an example to be venerated and followed by their contemporaries and by generations to come. The history of Coptic monasticism unto this day verifies this observation. It is no overstatement to say that, apart from

---

(19) *Ethiop. Synax.,* Ter. 22, Budge II, 535 - 6.

being the father of Christian monasticism, St. Antony has remained the prototype of Coptic monasticism. He has served as an ideal for both the anchorite and the coenobitic monk. This double role is due to the fact that his life was divided into solitary as well as coenobitic activities.

2. The Vita of St. Antony

The following *Vita Antonii* has been related to me by a monk of the Monastery of St. Antony. In the sense of the prototype function of St. Antony it seems to be much more relevant to see and to understand the mental image which a monk has of his patron-saint, than to add another biography to the large number of translations, abbreviations or condensations that are available.[20]

True, the informant had read or was told the story, and his source was probably one of the numerous Arabic *Vitae Antonii*, but what is important for our study, is the present understanding of St. Antony by a representative of the twentieth century Desert Fathers.[21]

"It is somewhere about here where our Anbâ Antûnîûs"[22] was buried. Though we don't know where exactly, but I am sure, he is here in the monastery. Every now and then, we are told by the Bedouins, who are around the monastery, that they see him and Anbâ Bûlâ walking on the walls (of the monastery). This is at night time, and they are carrying their lanterns, as they go up and down the wall. And we are glad that they are here. Anbâ Antûnîûs was a friend, a good friend of Anbâ Bûlâ (St. Paul the Theban), and his monastery is just across the mountain ..... Before Anbâ Antûnîûs came here he lived in the Nile Valley. He came from a good family, and they had plenty of money.[23] When he was still a young man, his father and his mother

---

(20) Clarus, L., *Das Leben des Heiligen Antonius von Athanasius dem Grossen*, 1857. Ellershaw, H., *The Life of St. Anthony in Select Writings and Letters of Athanasius*. (Nicene & Post Nicene Fathers, II, 4.) Lavaud, R., *Antoine le Grand, Père des Moines*, 1913. McLaughlin, Dom J.B., *St. Anthony the Hermit by St. Athanasius*, 1924. Mertel, H., *Des Heiligen Athanasius Leben des Heiligen Antonius*, 1917. Meyer R.T., *St. Athanasius, The Life of St. Anthony*, 1950. Queffelec, H., *Saint Anthony of the Desert*, 1954.

(21) It is impossible to write the account verbatim as it came from the lips of one of the monks. It is hoped, however, that enough originality is preserved to warrant this attempt.

(22) The word *Anbâ* might be best translated by Master, Lord.

(23) St. Antony was born in 251 A.D. in Coma, now Qimân al-'Arûs some 75 km. south of Cairo.

died. He had been a Christian, and he had gone to church. But when his parents had died, he was more prepared to receive the glorious news of our Lord Jesus Christ. One day, he heard the Gospel being read, and he felt as if it were spoken to him, that he should sell all that he had and give it to the poor people.[24] And so he gave away all he had, except a little which he kept for his sister. But some time later, when he was in church again,[25] he decided to put his sister into a convent, that she might be with the holy women.

"There were many monks[26] living in caves at that time. And Anbâ Antûnîûs went to see one of them. He wanted to live with him, but the monk refused to let him come near. So he lived all by himself. This is near Kuraimât, where the supply-trucks turn in.[27] Here, Anbâ Antûnîûs lived and began his life as a monk. Many villagers came to be healed and to talk to him. Some of them stayed with him, and there (at Dair al-Maimûn) began the first monastic community. He also went to Alexandria to fight the heretics.[28] After that, he came here, where he used to have a little garden with palm trees. He stayed around here the rest of his life. But when people heard where he was, they even came here to see him, and so he left the spring and his garden, and he went up to the cave, which is about an hour's walk from here — up on the mountain. But even there people came to see him, but many people stayed here at the foot of the mountain, and so this settlement became larger and larger, as more and more peasants settled down here. Before he died, he told them[29] that nobody was to know where they buried him, and to Anbâ Athânâsîûs he left his cloak and to Anbâ Sarâbîûn (Serapion) he left a sheepskin.[30] There are some people in France who say they have his bones, but he is here, there is no doubt.

---

(24) *Matthew*, 19 : 21.

(25) This time, St. Antony heard *Matthew*, 6 : 34.

(26) We know definitely about one monk, St. Paul the Theban.

(27) In 285 A.D., St. Antony settled on the east bank of the Nile at Pispir, the modern Dair al-Maimûn. It is true that the supply trucks (in the olden days camel caravans) coming from the Dependency of Anbâ Antûnîûs at Bûsh follow the old caravan road from Kuraimât to Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs.

(28) His first visit to Alexandria was during the persecution in 311 A.D. where he spent his time ministering to the confessors and martyrs, seeking also martyrdom for himself. His second visit to Alexandria was in 338 A.D., when he visited St. Athanasius and gave his support in the Arian controversy. He is said to have visited Alexandria a third time shortly before his death in 356.A.D.

(29) Two monks, Macarius and Amatas who had lived with St. Antony were the only people who knew the place of his burial.

(30) Athanasius, "An Epistle to his Brother Serapion" in *Historical Tracts of St. Athanasius*, 210 - 4.

"Only a few years ago (1950) Abûnâ Hazaqîâ (Ezekiel) had asked Abûnâ Mitîâs (Matthias) to get a certain book from the Church of St. Antony (within the monastery). And as Abûnâ Mitîâs went into the sanctuary he forgot to pay his respect to the Saint and to ask his intercession. Then he felt somebody patting his shoulder, and Abûnâ Mitîâs trembled, and everyone could see how pale his face was as he came out of the church and told them his experience. 'Anbâ Antûnîûs is always there', Abûnâ Hazaqîâ said, 'as your enter our church, you must show respect and devotion to him.' There are many monks here who have had similar experiences, who have seen him and who have also felt him."

The above mentioned narrative about the great Hermit reflects the more important incidents of his life. From the *Synaxarium* [31] one can conveniently divide his life into three main periods.[32] The first period extends from the death of his parents to his first eremitical abode including his call to the ascetic life. The second period dates from his stay at Pispir or Dair al-Maimûn to his final retreat to the eastern desert at Mount Clysma. And the third period accounts for his stay at the foot of Mount Clysma and later in the *maghâra* or cave in the face of the mountain precipice some 1,050 feet above the monastery.

St. Antony realized that his popularity had attracted many people during his life time, and thus he admonished his fellow-monks not to embalm him, for in his humility he feared less people should venerate him after his death. For St. Antony abhorred the attention that people gave to their dead.

Regarding the bodily remains of the Saint there is no unanimity as to its later history and location. As it has been shown by the testimony of our monk, the inhabitants of the monastery claim to have the body of St. Antony for themselves. In Mukaram's account, falsely attributed to Abû Sâlih, the Armenian, it is stated that the hermit was

---

(31) The *Synaxarium* is a collection of martyrological and hagiological material arranged for readings at services and during meals. Contrary to the traditional assumption that the Coptic synaxarium was compiled by Michael, Bishop of Athrib and Malig in the beginning of the 15th century, Burmester shows that the compilation is to be attributed to Peter, Bishop of Malig, the date being between the last quarter of the 12th century and the first half of the 12th century. Burmester, "On the date and authorship of the Arabic Synaxarium of the Coptic Church," 253; Graf, "Zur Authorschaft des Arabischen Synaxars der Kopten," *Orientalia,* IX, 1940, 240 - 243.

(32) Synax., *Patr. Orient.*, XI. 661-666.

buried under the floor of his cave.[33]

According to another tradition the grave of the Saint was discovered in 561 A.D., and the body was transferred to the Church of St. John the Baptist in Alexandria. Some time later, the Emperor Constantius had a daughter who was possessed by nine demons which resisted all exorcism, until the body of the Saint which had been transferred from Alexandria to Constantinople was placed in her room. For several centuries the body of St. Antony was kept in the Church of the Holy Wisdom (Hagia Sophia). In the late tenth or early eleventh century, a certain traveller named Jocelyn obtained the remains of the Saint and took them to his estate at La Motte-Saint Didier.[34] According to Hindringer[35] the body of St. Antony has been kept since 1491 in the Church of St. Julien in Arles. Jullien states that the remains are located in "le petit village de Saint-Antoine, au diocèse de Grenoble, à 10 kilomètres de Saint-Marcellin,"[36] and Schweinfurth mentions that the relics are claimed by the French city of Vienne whither they had been taken in 980 A.D.

In a lecture sponsored by the Société d'Archéologie Copte on April 16, 1941, Guy de Schouteete de Tervarent, Minister of Belgium in Cairo, pointed out that the Church of St. Antony in Vienne cannot claim the possession of all the relics of the Hermit. In 1231, St. Antony's arm came from Constantinople to Brugge, which explains the veneration of the Saint in Flanders. Tournai, Anvers and Arles got in the possession of several relics. The *cilice* of the Hermit is shown in Rome, and his beard is found in St. Cunibert's Church in Cologne, where, once a year, it shows some miraculous manifestations.[37]

When Arnold von Harff went on his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1496-99, he passed through a small French town, St. Antoine de Vienne, "which is standing on a little hill belonging to the abbot of the monastery, that has the right of life and limb. In the church, above the high altar, rests St. Antony in person, in a fine silver gilt shrine, but it is only shown to great lords who desire to see it. On the left of this high altar they give you red wine to drink which has run through the

---

(33) Abû Sâlih, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt*, 160. The author of this volume was Abû 'l-Mukaram Sa'dallah ibn Girgis ibn Mas'ud (1209 A.D.). For convenience sake, we shall refer, however, in further quotations to Abû Sâlih.

(34) Queffelec, *op. cit.*, 246.

(35) *Cf.* "Antonius," *Lexicon für Theologie und Kirche*, 1930-38

(36) Jullien, *Voyage dans le desert de la Basse-Thebaide*, 43.

(37) *Bull. Société d'Archéologie Copte* VII, 75.

holy body of St. Anthony, and on the same side, in a choir, they showed us the saint's arm complete .... Here this abbot maintains two hospitals, one for women, the other for men who have the mark of St. Antony's fire on hands or feet." [38]

When St. Antony died at the age of one hundred and five years, he had made a reputation for himself as founder, organizer and father of monasticism. Dair al-Maimûn, his first settlement, had become the centre of the monastic life in Egypt. [39]

3. Dair Al-Maimûn

At one time a monastery, to-day Dair al-Maimûn is a small village, located in a palm-grove on the east bank of the Nile. It can be reached from Cairo via Ma'adi — Helwân — as-Saff to Kuraimât (108 km.). At Kuraimât, one follows the desert track along the Nile for another 11 km.

At the beginning of the 13th century, the monastery was still inhabited. Abû Sâlih states: "The monastery called the Monastery of Al-Gummaizah stands upon the bank of the blessed Nile. Adjacent to it there is a keep, a garden, and a mill, and a wine-press. It stands near Dahrut, and contained, up to our time, thirty monks." [40] Maqrîzî in 1442 also identifies the monastery as the Monastery of Al-Gummaizah. [41] Amongst other things of lesser importance he mentions that the Church of Anbâ Antûnîûs in the vicinity of Itfîh had been newly erected. [42]

Wansleben travelling in 1673 from Cairo via Helwân and Beni Suef to the Red Sea monasteries, passed the village of Maimûn and thus made merely a brief mention of the small Monastery of St. Antony which is located on the east bank of the Nile. [43]

A picture of the monastery on the bank of the Nile is preserved by Frederick L. Norden. There is no indication of village life. The monastery wall, the keep and the two domed towers are the characteristics of this monastery in the middle of the 18th century. [44]

---

(38) Letts, *The Pilgrimage of Arnold von Harff Knight. . . in 1496 - 99*, 258.

(39) St. Antony, though he remained after his withdrawal from Pispir at Mount Clysma returned at intervals to his first retreat, visiting and giving instruction and comfort to the monks staying there. In St. Athanasius' *Vita* it is quite explicit that there was a monastery at Dair al-Maimûn.

(40) Abû Sâlih, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt*, 163.

(41) Wüstenfeld, *Maqrizi's Geschichte der Copten*, 87.

(42) Wüstenfeld, *op. cit.*, 136.

(43) Wansleben, *Nouvelle Relation en forme de Journal, d'un voyage fait en Egypte*, 294.

(44) Norden, *Travels in Egypt and Nubia*, II, 13.

In 1836, after having passed Karamat (Kuraimât), the Austrian traveller Joseph Russegger reached the Monastery of St. Antony or Dair al-Maimûn. This monastery, according to his description, consists of a large court surrounded by a wall with a little tower. All he noticed otherwise was a large number of geese which seemingly enjoyed the peaceful coexistence with the monks of the monastery.[45]

In the spring of 1955, Fr. Gabriele Giamberardini, O.F.M., went on a tour, retracing the steps of St. Antony. He began his tour by visiting the small township of Qimân al-'Arûs in the vicinity of Beni Suef, where St. Antony was born. From there he proceeded to Dair al-Maimûn where the saint established his first domicile. It was here, where Fr. Gabriele and his companion Fr. Leone Poggi were arrested on the suspicion of being English spies, especially since the two priests were seen taking photographs of the churches and the archaeological sites. Fr. Leone tried to convince the authorities that they were Italians and not British, but his attempt was in vain. The two priests were taken to Beni Suef, where, after a little while, they were freed. About two weeks later, Fr. Gabriele returned to Dair al-Maimûn to complete the work which he had begun. In the village of Dair al-Maimûn, Fr. Gabriele was welcomed by the village priest Abûnâ Mîkhâîl 'Abd al-Malik who showed to him the church of St. Antony which was built over the original cave of the Saint, which according to Fr. Gabriele was a tomb of Pharaonic times.[46]

Two churches, the Church of Anbâ Antûnîûs and the Church of Anbâ Mercurius or Abû Saifain located a few metres to the north of the former are the only remnants of a once distinguished monastic settlement.

The Church of Anbâ Antûnîûs with its two haikals or sanctuaries, the centre one dedicated to the patron-saint and the northern one to St. George, is built above the cave in which the Saint of the desert used to live prior to the establishment of the monastery. The cave, in the south side of the church, about 1.95 m. in depth, 1.75 m. in length and 0.80 m. in width, is covered to-day by a wooden door set in the floor. The only interesting object in the church, apart from the cave, is the haikal screen which shows the date of 1246 A.M. or 1529-1530 A.D.

There is a local tradition that tells about the miracle of Anbâ Antûnîûs which led to the building of this church. "The governor of

---

(45) Russegger, *Reise in Egypten, Nubien und Ost-Sudan*, I, 75.

(46) Giamberardini, *S. Antonio Abato Astro del Deserto*, 18 - 21.

Itfih, whose only son had died, was in deep sorrow. As it was the custom of the day he had the body of his son taken to Anbâ Antûnîûs. But when the servants came to the cave of the Saint, they found him and his disciples resting and asleep. They left the body with Anbâ Antûnîûs, and when, after a while, the Saint called to his disciples to perform the canonical Prayers, he was not a little surprised to find the boy talking, shouting and even responding to the Prayers. He had risen from the dead! When his mother heard what had happened to her son, she was so filled with joy that she began to babble. But the Saint said unto her : 'May thy tongue be tied'. And for the rest of her life she remained dumb. As a sign of his gratitude for the restoration to life of his son, the father, after the death of Anbâ Antûnîûs, ordered a church to be built to commemorate the place of the miracle."

The Church of Abû Saifain is apparently much older than the present building of its sister church. A stone haikal screen divides the sanctuary from the choir. To the north of the haikal there is a staircase leading to a bell-tower. Among the debris and rubbish one could identify a chair, which supposedly was used by Anbâ Kîrillus IV. The church is no longer used for Divine Service, and the local priests, Abûnâ Istafânûs Hannâ, Mîkhâîl 'Abd al-Malik and 'Abd al-Malik Mîkhâîl, assured me that the last service held there was on the day of the Consecration of the Church of Abû Saifain, on July 17th, 1940. A number of modern graffiti lead one to assume that the church was redecorated in 1933. Time has changed the significance of this holy place. Yet there is one rather interesting fact about this little valley village. Dair al-Maimûn is inhabited by Christians only, except for the policemen who are Muslims. It is one of the few villages in Egypt that can claim such a religious homogeneity.

4. The Influence of St. Antony

Before turning our attention to the monastery that bears his name, it might be well to consider the influence that St. Antony wielded and which has had such far reaching effects on his contemporaries and on the generations which followed him. His name became known and associated with a new way of life leading to salvation. His disciple, Anbâ Makârîûs who stayed with Anbâ Antûnîûs at least twice, established Antonian monasticism in the Desert of Scetis, where several thousand monks imitated and even surpassed the rigor and austerity of their founder. Anbâ Ammûn, the father of Nitrian monasticism, had been inspired by Anbâ Antûnîûs just as Anbâ Ishaq and Anbâ Pelusian had upheld the Antonian tradition at Mount Clysma.[47] Hilarion, the originator of Palestinian monasticism, derived his ascetic enthusiasm from the Great Hermit. Born in 291 A.D., in the vicinity of Gaza, he had made a pilgrimage to the south Qalâlâh mountain range for the purpose of learning from St. Antony the angelic life. After staying two months with him, he could no longer endure the crowds that came so frequently to visit the hermit.[48] On his return to his native land, Hilarion lived in a tiny cell near Gaza, which he made his abode for fifty years. Within a few years of his death, laurae and monasteries were to be found in all parts of Palestine.[49]

Johannes Cassianus (360-435 A.D.) visited the East with his friend Germanus. At Bethlehem he entered a monastery, but his desire to visit the Egyptian hermits of the Desert of Scetis inspired him to leave Palestine. For seven years he lived with the Egyptian Fathers of the Desert. Afterwards he went to Constantinople, where he became a pupil of St. John Chrysostom.

At Marseille, Cassian founded a monastery where the Egyptian rule was followed. Nearby, St. Honoratus founded in 400 A.D. the Monastery of Lerinum (Lerins), where until the introduction of the Benedictine Rule in the seventh century, the Egyptian system was followed.

The founder of Christian monasticism in Mesopotamia seems to have been Anbâ Awgin, an Egyptian pearl-fisher, who had worked at Suez. After a spectacular religious experience, he forsook his calling and entered a monastery. Then he chose a number of Egyptian monks to go with him to Mesopotamia and to build a monastery near Nisibis. He died about 363 A.D.[50]

Soon after St. Antony's death, people from all over the Levant came to Egypt to see and to learn about that of which they had heard so much. St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Constantia or Salamis in Cyprus,[51] visited Egypt and after his return to Palestine became hegoumenos of a monastery which he founded near Eleutheropolis in Judaea. St. Basil the Great,[52] Bishop of Caesarea and founder of many monastic institutions in Asia Minor, derived his knowledge of monasticism from the monks and hermits of Syria and Egypt, whom he visited.

---

(47) Queffelec, *op. cit.*, 175.

(48) MacKean, *Christian Monasticism in Egypt*, 140 - 147.

(49) Smith, *Studies in Early Mysticism in the Near and Middle East*, 29; *Ethiop. Synax.*, Tekemt 24, Budge, I, 187 - 8.

(50) Smith, *loc. cit.*

(51) Church Father, 315-402 A.D.

(52) Church Father, 330-379 A.D.

Monasticism like Christianity was introduced into Ethiopia from Egypt. In 480 A.D., Anbâ Aragawi, who is said to have received his habit from St. Pachomius, founded the celebrated monastery at Debra Damo. With him came eight other monks from the Monastery of St. Antony and together they are known in the Ethiopian Church as the "Nine Saints."[53] Until 1950, the Head of the Ethiopian Church was appointed and consecrated by the Coptic patriarch in Cairo, and the Abûnâ as he was called, was never a native of Ethiopia, but always an Egyptian. Many of the Ethiopian church leaders came from the Monastery of St. Antony.[54]

This practice of consecrating Egyptians for the Ethiopian See was discontinued after the return of the Emperor Haile Selassie from exile.[55] Desiring to have the leadership of the Church of Ethiopia in Ethiopian hands he entered into negotiations with the Alexandrian Patriarchate. After long discussions, an agreement was finally reached in 1959, whereby the Ethiopian Church now proposes a candidate who is nominated by the Emperor. This candidate is then consecrated at Cairo by the Patriarch of Alexandria as Catholicus-Patriarch of Ethiopia.[56]

In 385 A.D., St. Hieronymus (Jerome)[57] travelled in company with two Roman ladies, Paula and her daughter Eustochium to Palestine. From the Holy Land, St. Jerome and his companions continued their journey to Egypt where they visited the monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. After their return to Palestine they settled at Bethlehem where Paula founded four monasteries, three for nuns and one for monks. It was the latter monastery over which Jerome presided and where he was engaged in most of his literary work. The impact of Antonian monasticism upon the Latin Church has been mentioned elsewhere.[58]

The part played by early Egyptian monasticism in the conversion of England is a matter that has still to be determined. "It is more than probable," writes Stanley Lane-Poole, "that we are indebted to the remote hermits for the first preaching of the Gospel in England, where,

---

(53) Hyatt, *The Church of Abyssinia*, 66-69.

(54) Hyatt, *op. cit.*, 45.

(55) Gunther, *Inside Africa*, 250.

(56) His official title in Ethiopia is : "Reise Likane Papasat the Etheopia". i.e. Supreme Head of the Archbishops of Ethiopia." For a complete historical account of the relationship of the Egyptian Church with the Ethiopian Church, *cf.* Murad Kâmil, "La dernière phase des relations historiques entre l'Eglise Copte d'Egypte et celle d'Ethiopie."

(57) Church Father, 340-420 A.D.

(58) *Cf.* pp. 12 and 13.

till the coming of St. Augustine, the Egyptian monastic rule prevailed. But more important is the belief that Irish Christianity, the great civilizing agent of the early Middle Ages among the northern nations, was the child of the Egyptian Church."[59]

The Irish Stowe Missal, which is the oldest missal of the Irish Church,[60] refers to the Egyptian anchorites of the fourth century. The text, which is in four columns, and consists mostly of single words, reads in the second column of fol. 32 v^0 as follows : *pauli — antoni — et ceterorum patrum heremi sciti.*[61] The list of the Saints of Egypt appears between the *Memento etiam domine* and the *Nobis quoque peccatoribus* of the Canon.

There is no question that the Church of Egypt and the Church of Ireland had rather intimate relations with each other. De Lacy O'Leary[62] and Archdale King[63] mention an Irish Guide Book for visitors to the Holy Land of Scetis, which is still preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.[64] The Irish monk and geographer Dicuil (825 A.D.) referred in his *De mensura orbis terrae* to Egypt. He had learned about the geography of the land, the "Barns of Joseph" (Pyramids), from a brother, Fidelis, probably an Irish monk who passed through Egypt on his way to Jerusalem.[65] Warren speaks of seven Coptic monks who were buried at Disert Ulidh in Ulster,[66] and we find their names invoked in the Litany attributed to St. Oengus.[67]

Celtic and Irish monks[68] as well as St. Antony have been frequently portrayed with little bells. Portable *clochettes,* whether of iron or bronze, have played an important role in Celtic countries, Ireland,

---

(59) Lane Poole, *Cairo*, 203.

(60) The Stowe Missal was copied around 800 A.D. from an older Irish MS. written not later than 650 A.D. *Cf.* Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*. 468.

(61) Warner, *The Stowe Missal*. 15. I am indebted to Mr. Cyril S. Moss of the Oriental Department of the British Museum for the Latin text of this reference, as well as for the indication of the position it occupies in the Canon.

(62) O'Leary, *The Saints of Egypt*, 27.

(63) King, *The Rites of Eastern Christendom*, 343.

(64) In spite of concentrated efforts on my part I have been unable to discover any further particulars about this Irish Guide Book.

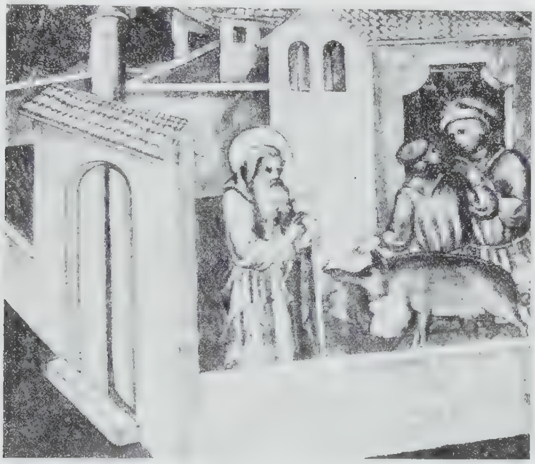
(65) *Cf.* Editions of *De mensura* by C.A. Walckenaer (Paris, 1907), A. Letronne (Paris, 1814), G. Parthey (Berlin 1870).

(66) Warren, *Irish Litanies*, II. 64-65.

(67) Though the Irish litanies are of great antiquity, the earliest *MS.* attestation does not go beyond the 12th century. St. Oengus (8th-9th century) lived as a hermit first at Diesertbeagh on the banks of the River Nore, and later in a more solitary district, known as Dysert Enos.

(68) Cabrol, *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne*, III, 1983-1987.

Scotland and Gaul. It seems doubtful, however, that St. Patrick's bell, dating from the fifth or the sixth century, can be traced to Egypt as it has been maintained by King. It seems more likely that, with the increase of St. Antony's popularity in the Western world, religious art bestowed upon him the same insignia with which the Irish monks were represented.[69]



The miracle of the healing of the little pig by St. Antony.

The city-seal of Uznach in Switzerland shows St. Antony with staff and *clochettes* in prayer. The seal has the following inscription: SIG. DOMUS SANCTI ANTONY IN CIVITATE ET COMITAT UZNAE,[70] whilst the seal of the Gemeinderat St. Antoni/Fbg.[71] has the Coptic Tau-cross with two *clochettes.*[72]

Furthermore, in the *Vita Bonifatii* attributed to Radbodo, Bishop of Utrecht (9th century), we discover a significant reference to the very illustrious company of the anchorites and monks, of whom the best were in Egypt, there were many in Ethiopia, whom the Thebaid has as

---

(69) King, *op. cit.*, 375. St Patrick's bell ... appears to have been made in imitation of the Coptic bells."

(70) Schubiger, Anselm. "Die Antönier und ihr Ordenshaus zu Uznach." *Der Geschichtsfreund*, xxxiv (1879), 87, ff.

(71) There are altogether 21 communities in Switzerland which are named after St. Antony.

(72) De Fischer, *Contributions à la Connaissance des relations Suisses-Egyptiennes*, 32.

(73) St. Boniface (680-754 A.D.), the Apostle of Germany.

patrons, Nitria as doctors, Triple India as champions.[74] There is no question, therefore, that the Egyptian monks were held in great esteem in Europe.

Apart from the direct influence of Egyptian monasticism upon European Christianity it might be well to mention only briefly some of the Egyptian Saints who are given special veneration in Europe. St. Warina of Garagos (Upper Egypt) had followed St. Maurice[75] to Switzerland where she suffered martyrdom during the Diocletian persecution. Her relics are venerated at Zurzach in Aargau.[76] St. Victor (Buqtur) is venerated in Geneva, where his relics were taken at the end of the fifth century,[77] and SS. Felix and Regula, who are commemorated on September 11, also belonged to the Egyptian Legion of the Thebaid. The two Saints suffered martyrdom and are the object of veneration at Zürich.[78]

Beg. 16th Century.

The pig of St. Anthony as a drinking vessel.

---

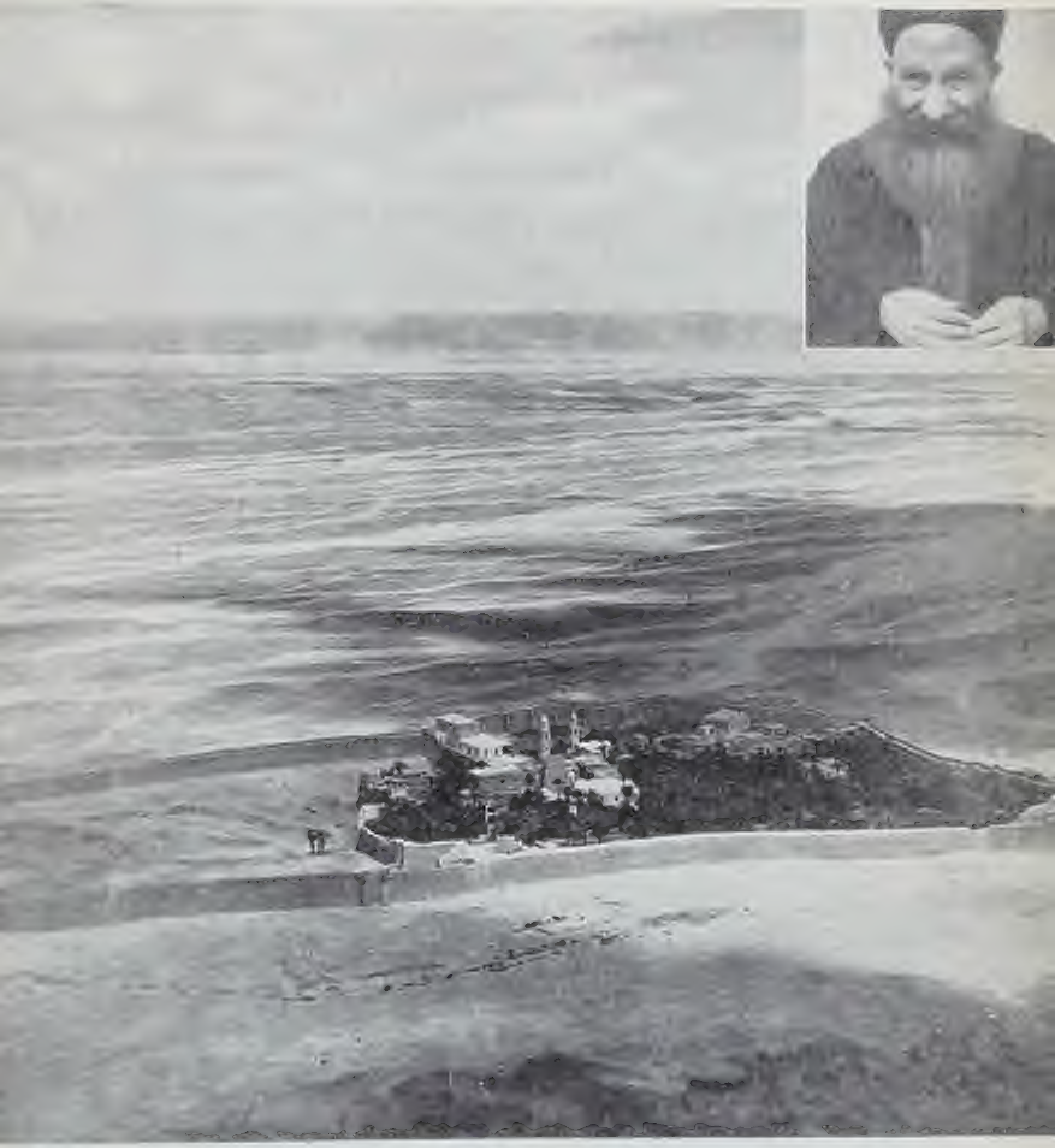
(74) Cerulli, *Etiopi in Palestine*, I. 4.

(75) St. Maurice en Valais was named after him.

(76) Stückelberg, "Die Verehrung der Hl. Verena." *Schweizerisches Archiv für Völkerkunde*, VI, (1906). Wymann, "St. Verena, Zurzach und Uri", *Neue Züricher Nachrichten*, 208, 209, (1944). *The Life of St. Warina, MS.* by R.P. Aquiqui S. J., Cairo. Huber, J. *Das Leben der Hl. Jungfrau Verena in Wort und Bild*, (Klingnau 1866 and 1879).

(77) De Fischer, *op. cit.*, 50.

(78) Hegi, F. "Felix und Regina", *Historisch-Biographisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, III, 135. Blanke, "Die Entstehung der Legende von Felix und Regula", *Neue Schweizer Rundschau*, 1937. Stückelberg, "Die Kephalophoren", *Anzeiger für die Schweizerische Altertumskunde*. N.F. XVIII, 1916.

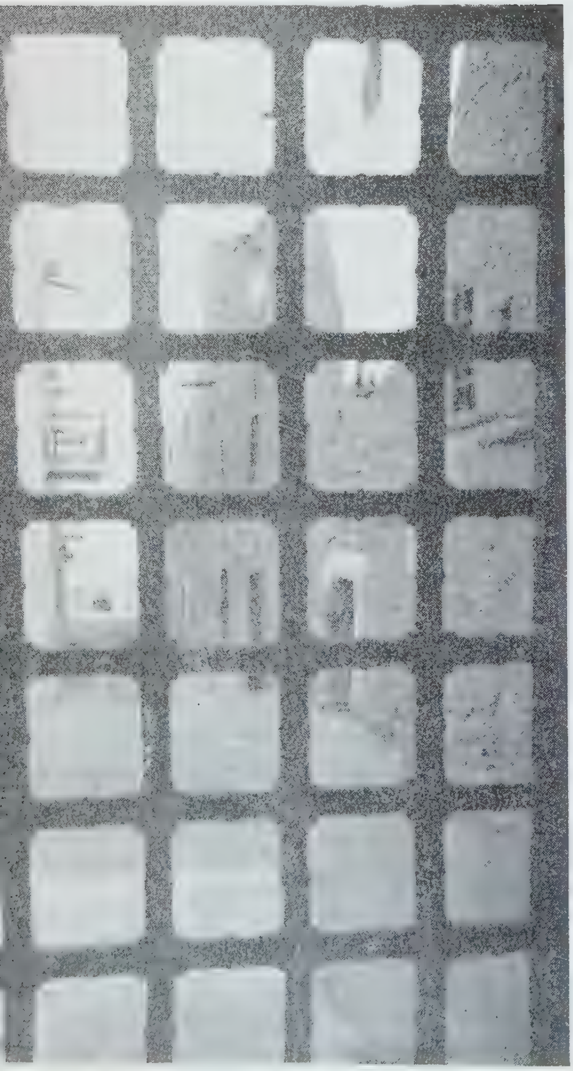


M. Jean Doresse

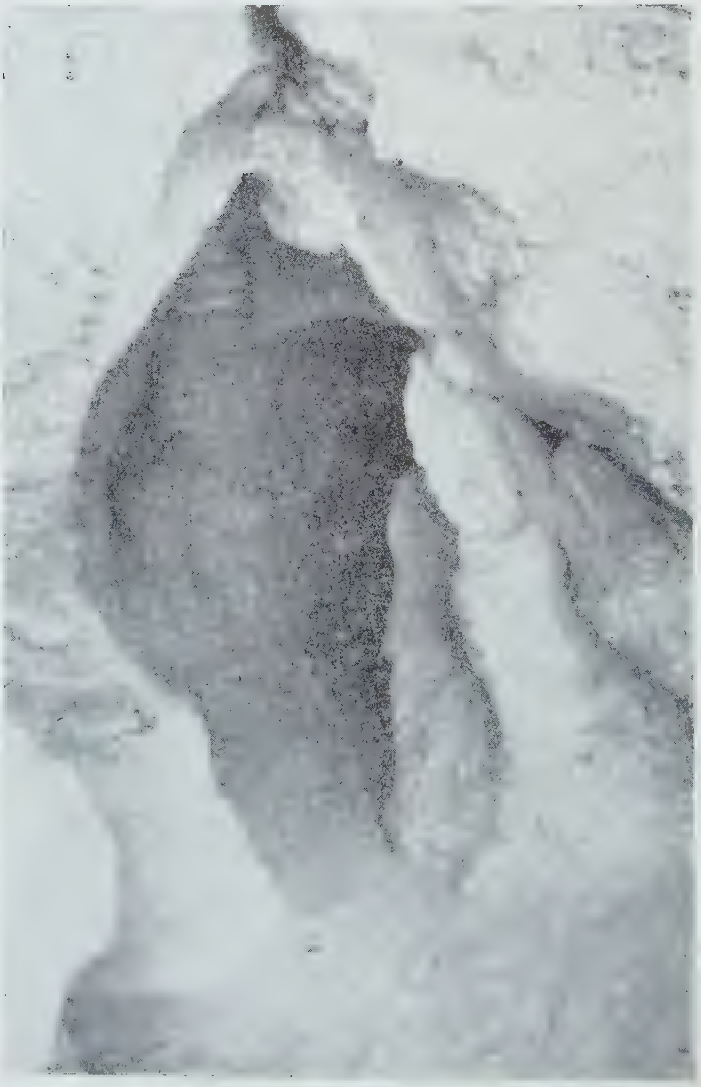
DAIR ANBA ANTUNIUS
Inset, Abûnâ Baniâmîn al-Antûnî, Hegoumenos of the Monastery of St. Antony.

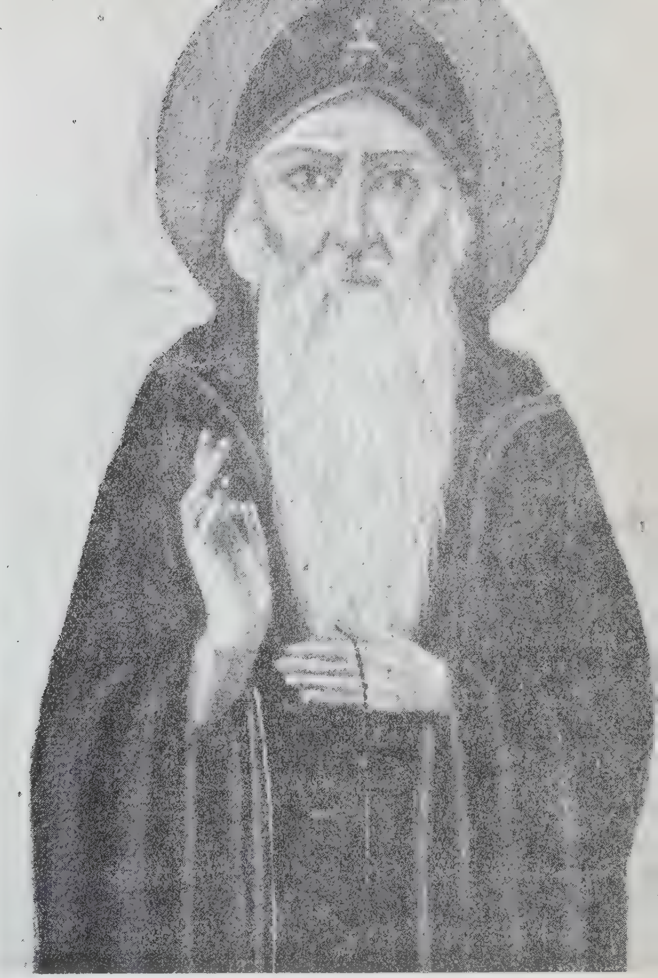
New Church of St. Paul from the east. Cells, and in the foreground, domes of the Church of St. Mark.

A street in the Monastery of St. Antony.



Entrance to the Cave of St. Antony.





St. Antony

Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs

1. The Beginning of the Monastery

FOR a more comprehensive understanding of the Monastery of St. Antony it is necessary to review briefly its history. Following the remark of Abû Sâlih, it is now generally assumed that the monastery was built in the reign of Julian the Apostate, that is between 361 A.D. and 363 A.D.[1] A few years after the death of the great hermit, his followers settled and organized themselves where their master had lived and died. The original settlement included merely the most necessary buildings. The monks lived in solitary cells, yet within walking distance of a communal worship centre where the Divine Liturgy was celebrated and where the monks took part in a common meal.

---

(1) Abû Sâlih, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and some neighbouring countries*, 161. "That Emperor of whom we have spoken, I mean Julian, was slain by the martyr Mercurius."

The relatively unorganized highly individualistic living conditions changed with the almost natural decrease in the fervour of the ascetics. The monks began to associate themselves in closer relationship for the purpose of safety, convenience and mutual fellowship. Thus the communal or coenobitic character of the Antonian life became more and more an outstanding factor at Mount Clysma.[2] The hermit retreated from his mountain cave to a separate cell within the framework of the monastic community, still living, however, a separated and highly ascetic life. It is interesting to observe that this mode of asceticism has prevailed to this day.

At present (1960), there are no anchorites living in the Wâdî 'Arabah or in the South Qalâlâh range, except for some Antonian monks who may visit the mountain cave of their master for special prayer, meditation or ascetic exercises, only to return to their monastery within a few hours or a day or two. This information was given to me by the monks. Mrs. Winifred Holmes, however, writes that in 1956 she saw a hermit at St. Antony's. "A mysterious figure in tattered dusty robes, a rough Tau[3] and a scarf wound round his head, who appeared suddenly in church during the long services beginning with Maundy Thursday.[4] He seemed dazed and exalted, perhaps a little strange as he stumbled in and wandered up into the choir, and gazed with amazement at the bishop in his panoply and glory, sitting on the bishop's throne before the narthex.[5] I was told that he was a solitary who lived in the desert outside the walls. He was treated with great deference by the senior monks, whom I saw speaking to him outside the church. He looked to me about 60, but much aged by his hard and solitary life."[6]

At the same time the life in separate cells within the monastery walls finds its present expression in men like Abûnâ Bûlûs al-Antûnî,

---

(2) The original form "Clysma" has been adopted throughout in this work, since there are so many spellings of this name in its Arabic dress, e.g. Qalzam, Qulzum, etc.; Margoliouth calls it κλῶσμα. Abû Sâlih, *op. cit.*, 171.

(3) The *Tau*, St. Antony's T-shaped stick, is still employed by the old monks to lighten the physical strain of standing during their long services. Fedden, *op. cit.*, 52 I have seen the *tau* being used in all monasteries.

(4) The Holy Week services actually begin on Palm Sunday.

(5) Mrs. Holmes refers here to the pontifical vestments. Furthermore, it is probable that the bishop sat near the haikal screen, since it is unlikely that the bishop would have turned his back to the altar.

(6) From a personal letter by Mrs. Winifred Holmes.

Abûnâ Yustus al-Antûnî and the young Abûnâ Buqtur al-Antûnî, who seldom leave their cells, living, as it were, the life of hermits within the walls.

When the Christian Church was confronted with its first great theological controversy caused by the teachings of Arius,[7] the monks were faced for the first time with theological and philosophical problems. That the persecutions of the Orthodox by the Arians were fairly widespread is evident from the remarks in the *History of the Patriarchs*[8] where we read that "the people continued for a long time to communicate in caves and deserts and in the fields in all the provinces of Egypt as far as the Thebaid, for the Arians, who were friends of the prince,[9] were spread over every place."

Egyptian monasticism remained loyal to its Alexandrian See, but one can well imagine the discussions and debates that must have filled the quiet air of the Desert of Mount Clysma. A pro-Arian attempt to suppress Orthodoxy launched by the Emperor Valens, culminated in an edict for the expulsion of the Orthodox. To what an extent St. Antony's monastery was affected by this internal persecution is difficult to determine. One thing, however, is certain, the Egyptian monasteries in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn and the Fayyûm remained strongholds of Orthodoxy.

It seems that the Monastery of St. Antony served as a place of refuge for some monks of the Desert of Scetis. We know that the monasteries in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn underwent several sacks during the fifth century, and we read in the *Ethiopian Synaxarium* that John the Short escaped to the Red Sea. "When the Barbarians came to the Desert of Scete to plunder the houses of the monks, and to slay the monks, this Saint Abba John went to the monastery of Saint Abba Antony in the Desert of Kuelzem by the Red Sea, not that he was afraid of death, but he said: 'I go that a pagan may not come and kill me, and go to Sheol because of me, I do not wish to be in a state of ease and for that pagan to suffer punishment of my account'."[10]

---

(7) Arius (ca. 250-366 A.D.), a learned theologian and successful preacher in Alexandria. Because of his subordinationist teaching about the Person of Christ he was excommunicated by Alexander. His teaching was condemned, largely through the influence of St. Athanasius, at the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D.

(8) Hist. Patr., *Patr. Orient.*, I, 414.

(9) Flavius Julius Constantius (317-361 A.D.) was the son of Constantine the Great and was a strong supporter of the anti-Athanasian party.

(10) *Ethiop. Synax.*, Tekemt 20, Budge I, 175.

On account of the decisions reached at the Council of Chalcedon,[11] the Egyptian Church separated from the rest of Christendom, and as the Egyptian monks firmly supported their patriarch we may naturally assume that those of the Monastery of St. Antony did the same. The state of confusion produced in Egypt by the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon was to have later consequences. The Byzantines or Melkites as they were called, accepted the decisions of Chalcedon, and there was naturally friction between them and the Egyptians who rejected these decisions.[12] Nor must it be forgotten that, on account of intermarriage, there must have been many cases, where, for example, a Byzantine would have been in agreement with the Egyptians or an Egyptian with the Byzantines.

2. Copts and Greeks

There is an interesting note in Butler's *Arab Conquest of Egypt* that asserts that the Melkite Patriarch St. John the Almoner (609-620 A.D.) supplied a certain Anastasius, Hegoumenos of St. Antony's monastery, with large sums of money and ordered him to buy up captives taken by the Persians. This was in the latter half of 615 A.D.[13] Fedden comes to the conclusion that Melkite or Byzantine monks must have inhabited the monastery in the seventh century, "for it is not likely that John the Almoner would have sent money to a Coptic abbot." [14] It is true that St. John "held the monastic system in the greatest reverence, and that he was the more profuse in his liberality to different monasteries." [15]

St. John the Almoner[16] was a person who expressed his Christian

---

(11) The Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. affirmed the definition of Nicaea (325) and of Constantinople (381). It therefore excluded the views of those who confused the Divine and Human natures of Christ in one. It affirmed the position of the existence of One Person in Two Natures, which are united unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly and inseparably. The Egyptians took their support from St. Cyril's statement «ἀλλὰ μίαν φύσιν τοῦ Θεοῦ λόγου ἐνσαρκωμένην», though it should be stated that Cyril used the word Φύσις as almost, if not quite the equivalent of ὑπόστασις. *Cf.* Ad Reginas I, ix, *P.G.* LXXVI, 1212.

(12) The Melkite Patriarch of Alexandria was appointed by the Emperor while the Egyptian Patriarch resided for several centuries in the Wâdî 'n Natrûn.

(13) Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt*, 68.

(14) Fedden, *A Study of the Monastery of St. Antony in the Eastern Desert*, 32.

(15) Neale, *A History of the Holy Eastern Church*, II, 57.

(16) An icon of St. John the Almoner, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Alexandria, hangs on the wall of the northern aisle of the Lower Church of the Church of Abû 's-Saifain in Old Cairo. Burmester, *Guide to the Ancient Coptic Churches of Cairo*, 46.

concern to all in need. He established hospitals for the sick, fed every day 7,500 of the poor, indeed his love for charity had no bounds.[17] Leroy, basing his information upon ancient manuscripts, states that "ses premiers occupants furent non des monophysites, mais de moines grecs (melkites)." This situation lasted until the eighth century with certain interventions of the Copts, who were not always too friendly. Then around 790 A. D., some Coptic monks disguised as Bedouins entered the monastery to steal the bodily remains of St. John the Short of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, who had found shelter at St. Antony's sometime in the fifth century and who had died there.[18]

The *Ethiopian Synaxarium* [19] supplies the details of the story how, during the days of Anbâ Yûânnis IV (777-799 A.D.), the body of Anbâ Yuhannis the Short was brought back to Scetis. At that time, the monks of the Monastery of St. Macarius went to the Mount Clysma, but when they arrived, "it was not possible for them to fulfil their mission for the moment, for the body of the Saint was guarded by the Melkite Chalcedonians who dwelt in the sanctuary." Then, "the judge from among the Arabs said to the Melkite bishop who sat in the sanctuary : 'Make all your men get out of the church, for I wish to enter the church myself and stay here this night.' The bishop did as the judge commanded, and the Coptic monks made ready their beasts outside the town and entered by night and took the body of Anbâ Yuhannis, and departed to Cairo."[20] From there the monks returned to the Desert of Scetis. This story proves the Melkite occupation of the monastery at the end of the eighth century.

That some of the Coptic monasteries occasionally changed their ecclesiastical allegiance is evident from the following remark by Maqrîzî. During the patriarchate of Anbâ Murqus II (799-819 A.D.), the Patriarch of the Melkites who was well educated in medicine went to Baghdâd to heal one of the concubines of the caliph. After she was cured, the caliph ordered that the monasteries of the Melkites which had been occupied by the Copts in Egypt were to be returned.[21] It is likely that the two Red Sea Monasteries were affected by this decision. The Copts may have taken possession of the monasteries only to surrender them again shortly afterwards to the Melkites.

Abû Sâlih in 1178 and Maqrîzî in 1442 quite clearly state that the Egyptians were in possession of the Monastery of St. Antony.[22]

---

(17) Neale, *op. cit.*, II, 52-60.

(18) Leroy, *Moines et Monastères du Proche Orient*, 48.

(19) Ethiopian Synax., *Patr. Orient.*, IX, 418-422.

(20) This event is commemorated by the Ethiopian Church on the 29th of Nahase.

(21) Wüstenfeld, *op. cit.*, 59.

(22) Abû Sâlih, *op. cit.*, 160.

3. From the Eighth to the 14th Century

If the monastery of St. Antony underwent the same or a similar fate as that of the monasteries in the Desert of Scetis in the eighth or ninth century, it is difficult to know. It is reported that during the patriarchate of Anbâ Mîkhâîl I (744-768 A.D.) tribes moved around "in mountains in the eastern part of Egypt, from Bilbais to Al-Qulzum and the sea, consisting of Muslims who were called Arabs. And there were among them more than thirty thousand horsemen, and they had chiefs in command of them."[23] About this time, the middle of the eighth century, we hear of Orthodox monks who went to the Monastery of St. Antony. Anbâ Mînâ, who is commemorated in the *Synaxarium*[24] on the 7th of Hatûr, entered the monastery, after he had left his wife. At St. Antony's he became a friend of Anbâ Mîkhâîl who afterwards in 743 A.D. ascended the patriarchal throne. Then both Anbâ Mînâ and Anbâ Mîkhâîl left the monastery at Mount Clysma and went to the Desert of Scetis to the Monastery of St. Macarius where they became disciples of Anbâ Abrâm and Anbâ Girgis.[25]

During the patriarchate of Anbâ Quzmân III (920-932 A.D.) we hear of a certain monk, Mînâ, from the Monastery of Anbâ Antûnîûs, who with his friend, Buqtur, made a tour and penetrated into the lands of Abyssinia, where they presented themselves to the metropolitan asking him for money. Upon the refusal of the metropolitan to supply them with any, they wrote a counterfeit letter, as if from the patriarch, with which they caused a great deal of internal dissension in Abyssinia which eventually led to insurrection.[26] Though this incident is of little importance for the history of the monastery, it shows that the monastery of Mount Clysma had some relationship with the Ethiopian Church in the 10th century.

After two hundred years of internal tension and intrigue, the situation of the Egyptians changed with the Arab Conquest. The survival of Christianity in Egypt was due largely to the influence of the monasteries, and the security of the latter was due in some degree to their remoteness in a desert or mountain fastness. Yet few passages in the annals of Egypt are more agreeable reading than those which tell of the extremely friendly relations that prevailed between

---

(23) Hist. Patr., *Patr. Orient.*, V, 101.

(24) Synax., *Patr. Orient.*, III, 258-260, also *Ethiop. Synax.*, Khedar 7, Budge I, 214-216.

(25) *Cf.* ch. Dair Abû Maqâr, No. 4.

(26) Renaudotius, *Hist. Patr. Alex. Jacobit.*, 329; *Hist. Patr.*, II, II, 119; *Ethiop. Synax.*, Magabit 3, Budge III, 667.

some of the Coptic hegoumenoi and the caliphs, and the delight which the latter took in visiting the monasteries.[27]

There were periods when the Church appears to have been left in peace, but again there were periods of fierce persecution, distress and trouble. Al-Hâkim's persecution and the destruction of some 3,000 churches between 1000 and 1017 A.D. caused many Christians to escape to the desert.

The 11th century brought a number of calamities upon the Egyptians.[28] We hear of an earthquake that laid waste many cities, a pestilence that caused much suffering and, lastly, a rebellion by the Kurds and the Turks, inflicting every kind of misery.[29] War and pestilence was followed by famine and unexampled suffering. Peace was partially restored to Egypt when Nasr ad-Dûlah, the leader of the Turks, was defeated. The remains of his army, however, invaded the Thebaid, where they pillaged the monasteries and put to death many of the monks.[30] When Nasr ad-Dûlah was slain these calamities ceased. The monasteries of the Thebaid were those of St. Antony and St. Paul the Theban. The extent of the devastation, however, is not known to us. About one hundred years after the sack by the Mamelukes, the Monastery of St. Antony was restored and was in Coptic hands. During the patriarchate of Anbâ Murqus III (1166-1189 A.D.), we hear of a certain Murqus ibn Qunbar who "went over to the doctrine of the Melkites, but afterwards returned to that of the Jacobites. After that he again went over to the Melkites and then returned to the Jacobites, but this time he was not received."[31] Renaudotius mentions that, threatened with excommunication by the patriarch, this "filius Elkonbari" submitted to the Coptic Church and subsequently was sent to the Monastery of St. Antony. There he was compelled to have the hair of his head shaved, and to prove his good faith by swearing on the body of the Saint.[32]

A manuscript of the 11th or 12th century of a letter by Abûnâ Mîkhâîl to the hegoumenos Theodore contains a petition of the writer that the hegoumenos may accompany him to the Monastery of St. Antony. "Now it is many days since I came to the service and sought

---

(27) Butler, *op. cit.*, 491.

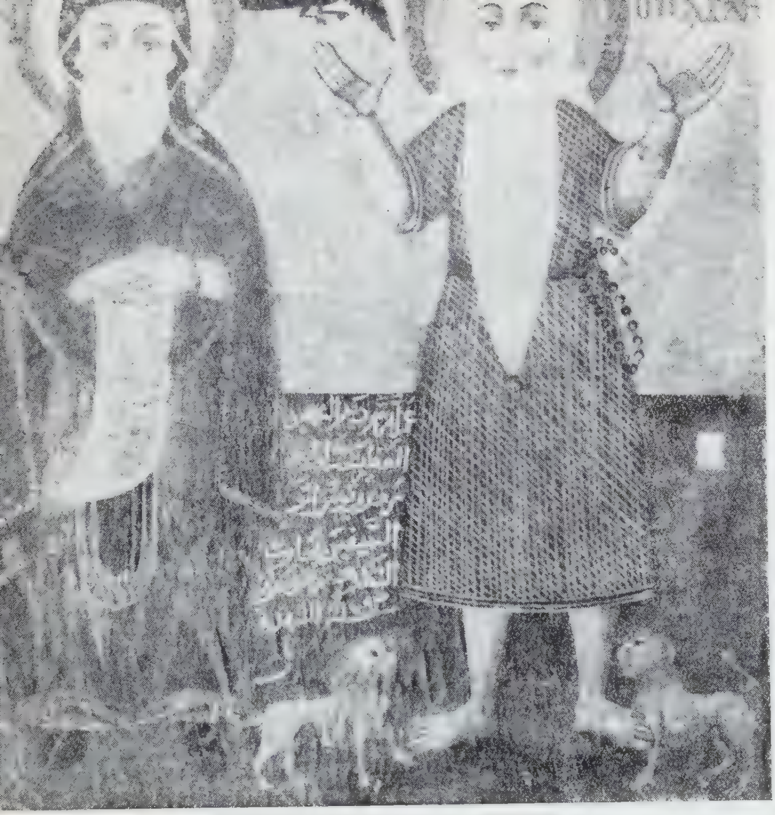
(28) Especially during the patriarchate of Christodoulus (1047-1077 A.D.).

(29) Renaudotius, *op. cit.*, 443, Neale, *op. cit.*, II, 220.

(30) Renaudotius, *loc. cit.* Seven monks martyred by the Berbers at the Mountain of the Great Saint Anbâ Antûnîûs are commemorated in the *Synaxarium* on the 26th of Bâbah.

(31) Malan, *A Short History of the Copts, by Maqrizi.* 94-95.

(32) Renaudotius, *op. cit.*, 551 ; Abû Sâlih, *op. cit.*, 20-43.



SS. Antony and Paul.

Coptic Museum No. 3418
Dated 1777 A.D.

Water source issuing from rock. Basin in centre is for drinking water, the hole on the left for outflow.

means to go to Apa Antonius; and the... have not been able to bring me (thither)... But I humbly beg, for God's sake, that thou come and that we go to Apa Antonius and lay our faces one to another, perhaps we shall be held worthy to lay our bones there. I think that they will be preparing the caravan on the 6th Sunday and we (will) go thither, if it be God's will, on the 7th. We will take the litter (?) and mount thereon, both together."[33]

During the patriarchate of Anbâ Yûânnis VI (1189-1216), the monastery was inhabited by Coptic monks and even supplied the Ethiopian Abunate. The story leading to the consecration of Abûnâ Ishaq is reported by Renaudotius.[34] The patriarch consecrated a certain Kilus, Bishop of Fuwah, for the Ethiopian Church. After having served for four years, Kilus was charged with the murder of the treasurer of the Metropolitan Church. On bare suspicion of having purloined a golden staff of great value, Kilus had caused the priest to be seized, and scourged to death. Kilus had to leave the country and Ishaq of St. Antony's Monastery became his successor. "Adductus in Ecclesiam Kilus filius Molebasi, Metropolitica dignitate spoliatus est: ordinatusque ejus loco Isaac Monachus ex Laura S. Antonii, quicum fratre suo majori Josepho inter Monachos magna laude vixerat; hunc vera sacerdotem ordinavit eodem die 11 Phamenoth, anno Martyrum, 926; quique erat 9 Ramadan anni 606, J.C. 1209."[35]

Abû Sâlih, writing in the beginning of the 13th century, says: "This monastery possesses many endowments and possessions at Misr. It is surrounded by a fortified wall. It contains many monks. Within the wall there is a large garden, containing fruitful palm-trees, and apple-trees, and pear-trees, and pomegranates, and other trees besides beds of vegetables, and three springs of perpetually flowing water, with which the garden is irrigated and which the monks drink. One feddan and a sixth in the garden form a vineyard, which supplies all that is needed, and it is said that the number of the palms which the garden contains amounts to a thousand trees, and there stands in it a large well built qasr... The monastery possesses property also in Itfîh. There is nothing like it among the other monasteries inhabited by Egyptian monks. It is the possession of Jacobite monks."[36]

It is quite uncertain if the monastery at Mount Clysma sustained any damage as to its inmates or influence during the period of the Black Death in the middle of the 14th century which ravaged the monasteries in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn and caused them to be deserted.

---

(33) Crum, *Catalogue of the Coptic Manuscripts in the Collection of the John Rylands Library, Manchester*, 138.

(34) Renaudotius, *op. cit.*, 563.

(35) Renaudotius, *loc. cit.*

(36) Abû Sâlih, *op. cit.*, 160.

At any rate, it is very possible that the monastery was included among the many renovation projects that were executed by the Coptic Church during the 12th and 13th century. We know that the wall paintings in the Church of St. Antony belong to the 13th century, being the work of the sons of Ghâlib (1232-1233).[37] The next reference comes to us from a Syriac MS. quoted by Evelyn White.[38] This document refers to a certain hegoumenos Constantine of the Monastery of the Syrians who, being dissatisfied with his post because of the insults and dangers from the monks, fled to the Monastery of St. Antony. As he departed, he took with him the book of Mâr Ishaq and a cross of silver. Though he had intended to return these belongings to Scetis, he died at Mount Clysma and the objects remain there to this day.[39] This event took place during the patriarchate of Anbâ Kîrillus III (1235-1243).

During the reign of Anbâ Yûânnis VII (1271-1293), a venerable old man, one of the monks of St. Antony's Monastery, saw in a vision a glorious angel who said: "Within three days, Anbâ Ghabrîâl will be taken from us and he will be led to Alexandria to ascend the patriarchal throne." When the old monk came out of his cell, he met Anbâ Ghabrîâl and related to him his vision. Then one day the magistrate of the town of Entafih came to the Monastery of St. Antony with a letter from the king instructing Anbâ Ghabrîâl to report at once so that he could be consecrated to the patriarchate in Alexandria. They seized him against his will and took him to the city of Alexandria with great ceremonies. The bishops accompanied him and all the people rejoiced on behalf of the future patriarch. That day, Anbâ Ghabrîâl ordained a metropolitan of Jerusalem, bishops and priests and deacons. At this time, St. Antony appeared to him and said: "Your death is approaching and within a year and a half you will be judged by God, and you will receive eternal life."[40]

4. European Pilgrims Rediscover the Monastery

Probably the first of the European travellers to mention the Desert of the Thebaid as the abode of monks and hermits was the Venetian pilgrim Marino Sanuto who passed through Egypt in 1320.[41] He mentions the "triangular pyramids which are said to have been Joseph's

---

(37) Piankoff, "Peintures au Monastère de Saint Antoine", 163.

(38) Evelyn White, *The Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn*, II, 389-390.

(39) Wright, *Cat. Syr. MSS.* In British Museum, No. DCXCVI, 580.

(40) *Ethiop. Synax.*, Hamle 11, Budge IV, 1107.

(41) Marino Sanuto, *Secrets for True Crusaders*, 60-61.

granaries." And two leagues from them he locates the ruins of the city of Thebes. "Adjoining this is the wilderness of the Thebaid, where in the days of old there was a multitude of monks."[42]

In the first part of the 14th century, Ludolph, parish priest of Suchem, in the diocese of Paderborn, visited Egypt on his pilgrimage to the Holy Land. He mentions the monastic life he encountered in the following way: "Likewise in the Egyptian deserts there stand at this day so many cells and hermitages of holy fathers, that in some places, I believe, for two or three German miles there is one at every bow-shot. At the present day very many of them are inhabited by Indians, Nubians and Syrians living under the rule of St. Antony and St. Macarius... In this desert there is a place beneath an exceeding tall and narrow rock, wherein St. Antony used to dwell, and from out of the rock there flows a stream for half a stone's-throw, until it is lost in the sand, even as running water flows into the snow and is seen no more. This place is visited by many for devotions and pleasure, and also by the grace of God and in honour of St. Antony many sicknesses are healed and driven away by the fountain."[43]

In his description of his travels to the Orient (Oltramare) in 1346, Fr. Niccolo di Poggibonsi refers to the Cave and the Monastery of St. Antony which he had visited. According to his account, however, the Monastery of St. Antony was situated two miles beyond the Pyramids.[44]

On the 5th of Ter, the *Ethiopian Synaxarium* commemorates Anbâ Mattâ I (1376-1408), the 87th Patriarch of Alexandria. Before his consecration to this office, he lived at the Monastery of St. Antony, "and he dwelt there, fighting strenuously. And there (at the monastery) was a certain righteous monk whose name was Jacob, and he saw a vision in which it seemed that a shining angel came unto Abba Matthew, and embraced him, and gave keys into his hands. And when Abba Jacob awoke, he told this to Abba Matthew who straight-away, because he hated empty praise, wandered round the country from city to city. One day, whilst Abba Matthew was officiating in the office of the Eucharist, he saw our Lord Christ sitting upon the altar, and He lay in the paten like a little child. And at the time when he broke the Offering, he stood up for a long time with his hands stretched

---

(42) Evelyn White feels that this reference is about the Desert of Scetis. (Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 399). Yet, Marino speaks of the "wilderness of the Thebaid, which reaches to the Red Sea."

(43) Ludolf von Suchem, *Description of the Holy Land*, 80.

(44) Niccolo di Poggibonsi, "Oltramare" in Golubovich, *Biblioteca Bio-Bibliografica della Terra Santa*, V, (1346-1400), cap. 194.

out and covered with blood, and he continued to weep abundantly, and he was afraid, and he told this vision to no man. And this teacher saw him and he marvelled at his standing still so long a time, and then he prayed to God to reveal to him this matter... Then Abba Matthew fetched some iron nails, and drove them into his knee every Friday until a worm came out therefrom." [45]

In 1395, Ogier VIII, Seigneur d'Anglure, came to the Holy Land and Egypt during the period of the Crusade of Nicopolis. With a number of French pilgrims he visited the monasteries of St. Antony and St. Paul, after having visited the Monastery of St. Catherine. On the 25th of November he sailed on the Nile to the nearest point of the caravan route to the ancient monasteries of the Red Sea. "The Monastery of St. Antony", Ogier noted, "was even more beautiful than that of St. Catherine. Its inhabitants numbered one hundred monks — most holy, goodliving, charitable, benign and self-denying Christian Jacobites." [46]

Then, twenty-six years later, in May 1421, Ghillebert de Lannoy, who was both traveller and diplomat, sailed with seven pilgrims to Egypt in order to visit the Monastery of St. Catherine. Instead of continuing his travels to the Holy Land, Ghillebert returned to Cairo and sailed up the Nile for two days to the Church of St. George, from where he crossed the Arabian desert to the Monastery of St. Antony. St. Antony's was inhabited by Jacobite monks, who were circumcised Christians, and of whom there were fifty. Furthermore, Ghillebert referred to the beautiful palm-garden and the many fruit trees and the castle-like building which was built round a spring which came out of the rock. [47]

In the year 1436, a German pilgrim by the name of Dettlof Heinkel visited the Monastery of St. Antony, where he inscribed his name, his coat of arms and the date of his arrival. For that matter, it was the custom of the pilgrims to add their coat of arms to their names as can be seen by the many coats of arms in the refectory of the Monastery of St. Catherine. [48]

By the beginning of the 15th century, the Desert of St. Antony

---

(45) *Ethiop. Synax.*, Ter 5. Budge II, 453.

(46) *Le Saint Voyage de Jérusalem par le Baron d'Anglure en 1395*, 167 f.

(47) Ghillebert, *Oeuvres de Ghillebert de Lannoy*, 69.

(48) Rabino, *Le Monastère de Sainte-Catherine*, 67. For the coat of arms see p. 71, No. 46. This graffito, as it was placed on the west wall of the church, is almost completely destroyed. The coat of arms showing three hearts arranged around a circle is still visible. A better coat of arms of the same pilgrim is preserved on the south wall of the church.

had become an attraction for pilgrims, though there is evidence that its location was much disputed. We read in the *Travels and Adventures* of the Spanish pilgrim Pero Tafur (1435-39) the following note: "The pilgrims had to return that night to sleep at Jericho and to go the next day to Quarantana, where our Lord fasted. But I arranged with a Moor to take me to the desert of Arabia, three leagues further on, where St. John preached, and where the first Hermit, St. Antony, as well as other Holy Fathers, retired to live, and from there I returned to the Dead Sea." [49]

Writing between 1419 and 1441, Maqrîzî listed the Monastery of al-'Arabah as the ninth in his catalogue of the 86 monasteries in Egypt. To reach this monastery, he says, "one travels for three days by camel, for it is located between the Eastern mountains and the sea of al-Qalzam. All kinds of fruits are planted in the monastery, and, furthermore, it has three springs of running water. It was built by St. Antony and the monks of this monastery fast throughout their whole life. Their fasting lasts until the evening when they do take food, except for the great fast and the Bermûlât, when their fasting lasts until the rise of the stars." [50] Usually Holy Week falls in the month of Barmûdat.

Another pilgrim to the Holy Land who makes mention of the Thebaid is Felix Fabri. Twice he had travelled to the Holy Land around 1484, and in fulfilment of a promise which he had made to his brethren of the Dominican Monastery in Ulm, he kept an exact record of all that he saw on his journey. Felix Fabri makes merely a brief mention of the Eastern desert. "Next we cast our eyes toward the south, into the gulf of the Red Sea, and beyond its channel we saw exceeding lofty mountains. In that place is the most desolate wilderness, the Thebaid, wherein the most approved monks once dwelt. This wilderness is bounded on the South by the ocean and by the Nile." [51]

Neither Felix Fabri nor his travelling companion on his second journey, Bernhard von Breydenbach, visited the Wâdî 'Arabah, and all that Bernhard adds to our picture is his remark that Greek monks inhabited the Eastern desert. "Also by going up the Nile, one soon comes to the Deserts of Aran and Saran and Scetis, of which mention is made often in the Lives of the Fathers, and here are seen to-day

---

(49) Pero Tafur, *Travels and Adventures 1435-1439*, 59.

(50) Wüstenfeld, *op. cit.*, 87-88.

(51) Felix Fabri, *The Book of Wanderings*, II, 573.

the deserted monasteries of the holy fathers Antonius, Macarius, Paul the first hermit and many others... In these places in former years, many Greek monks used to reside, who are known by the general term *calogeri,* but all this is lacking in these days, when former charity is growing cold."[52]

It is quite unlikely that Bernhard von Breydenbach's observation is correct. For we read that at the Council of Florence in 1439, the Coptic Church was represented by a delegate from the "celebrated Monastery of St. Antony". John had been hegoumenos of the monastery when he was chosen for this high honour. He travelled to Florence, but he arrived late and the Greek delegates had already departed. Still a decree was issued for the reunion of the Copts with the other churches. The desert father from Mount Clysma signed the Act of Union (uniting Latins, Greeks and Jacobites) which for a few days, at least, united the whole of Christendom.[53]

That the monastery was definitely in Coptic hands is also evident from the fact that, in the middle of the 15th century, the monastery supplied the Church with its 91st patriarch, Anbâ Ghabrîâl (1466-1474). Renaudotius referring to Wansleben says: "Gabriel: antea Archimandrita Monasterii Occidentalis, an idem sit quod vocavit Wanslebius S. Antonii, nescimus."[54]

On one of my visits to the Church of St. Antony, Abûnâ Mitîâs al-Antûnî, the hegoumenos, went into a detailed account of the destruction of the monastery library in either 1484 or 1493. At that time, it must have been the practice of the monks to entertain the services of Bedouins, be it as gardeners, servants, etc. One night the Bedouins, desiring to become the masters of the monastery, indiscriminately killed all monks, and took possession. The smoke stains in the Church of St. Antony still remain as a solemn reminder of these 70 years of desolation. For it was in the old church, the Church of St. Antony, that they established their kitchen, lighting their fires with

---

(52) Per Xylum etiam ascendendo mox venitur in deserta Aran et Saran et Scithy de quibus in vita patrum sepe mentio fit ibique videntur monasteria hodie desolata sanctorum patrum Antonii, Macharii, Pauli primi hermite et aliorum multorum... Illis in locis superioribus annis multi monachi vocabulo nuncupantur : sed haec omnia in dies deficiunt charitate pristina frigescente. Breydenbach, *Les Saintes Pérégrinations de Bernard de Breydenbach*, 23.

(53) Hofmann, G., "Kopten und Aethiopier auf dem Konziel von Florenz." *Orient. Christ. Per.* 8 (1942), 11-24.

(54) Renaudotius, *op. cit.*, 611, and Neale, *op. cit.*, II, 340.

the ancient scrolls and documents of the Antonian library.[55]

We do not know the exact period of the devastation of the monastery. An interesting note, however, comes to us through Jean Thénaud, who visiting the Monastery of St. Catherine in 1512 makes the remark that at a distance of four days from there is situated the Monastery of St. Antony which is occupied by Syrian monks, and furthermore, that the monastery was destroyed and its monks killed some seven years before.[56]

Between 1517 and 1520, Leo Africanus (Eliberitanus), properly known as Al-Hassan ibn Muhammad al-Wezaz al-Fasî, visited Egypt, where he travelled on the Nile from Cairo to Assuan. In his *History and Description of Africa*, Leo Africanus mentions, that "among the monasteries of Egypt those of Saint Antony, Saint Paul and Saint Macarius are the principal. The first lieth in Troglodytica right ouer against Sait upon a hill, where St. Antony was said to be beaten by diuels, the second (St. Paul's Monastery) is seated not far from this, in the middest of a desert."[57]

In the history of the Monastery of the Syrians we read that Anbâ Ghabrîâl VII (1525-1568) assisted in the rebuilding of the monastery. At that time, 63 monks inhabited Dair as-Surîân, and of these 20 were sent to Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs, while another group of 10 monks helped in the reconstruction of Dair Anbâ Bûlâ.[58] Belon du Mans in 1539 may well have been the first traveller to refer to the monastery after the energetic restoration by Anbâ Ghabrîâl VII. His testimony, however, is most unreliable. As Fedden points out, from St. Catherine's he says with shameless exaggeration, "nous voyons aisément les montagnes où est situé le monastère de Saint Antoine, ou de Saint Macaire."[59] An anonymous Spanish Franciscan who visited Egypt in 1555 merely mentions the Desert of the Thebaid, which was once inhabited by SS. Antony and Paul and many other hermits.[60]

After the restoration of the monastery, we hear of an Abyssinian community living with the Egyptians in the Monastery of St.

---

(55) This story is also mentioned by Butler, *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt*, I, 344, who has taken the story from Wansleben, *Nouvelle Relation...*, 301.

(56) Schefer, *Le voyage d'outremer de Jean Thénaud et la relation de l'ambassade de Dominico Trevisan auprès Soudan d'Egypte*, 81.

(57) Brown, *The History and Description of Africa*, III, 1022.

(58) Monks of Dair as-Surîân, *Sirat al-Anbâ Yuhannis Kame...*, 53.

(59) Fedden, *op. cit.*, 43, Belon du Mans, *Les observations de plusieurs singularitéz et choses mémorables...* 129.

(60) Luke, *A Spanish Franciscan's Narrative*, 60.

Antony. Francesco Alvarez (1520) refers to Abyssinian pilgrims to Jerusalem, who came from Deboroa and passed via Hamâsên to Suachin, a journey which they accomplished in fifteen stages. From Suachin they went towards the Nile and then to the monastery where St. Antony the Hermit lived.[61] Forty years later an Abyssinian monk, who called himself the small son of the sons of Takla Haymanot, wrote a book on penance. The colophon states that this volume was written in 1561 in the Monastery of St. Antony.[62]

Information about the monastery during the Middle Ages is very scanty. Here and there the church historians make mention of a hegoumenos, a bishop or a patriarch whose name by chance slipped into the pages of some monastic manuscript.

5. The 17th and 18th Century Travellers

It would be beyond the scope of this brief historical account to record in detail the impressions and experiences of the men who ventured to the Red Sea desert by camel caravan with guides and guards, food supplies and guns. Still, it is interesting to compare their notes and thus to evaluate the size and importance of the monastery.

In 1520, a Portuguese mission travelling through Egypt and Ethiopia passed by the Monastery of St. Antony. Dom Franciscus merely mentions the monastery which they reached after eight days of travel from the valley of the Nile.[63]

One of the first French travellers to visit the monastery was the Révérend Père Cassien of Nantes, an agent of the French archaeologist, naturalist and scholar Peiresc, who in 1617 travelled to the eastern desert to make a study of the monastery library.[64] Unfortunately, however, all traces of this significant visit have been lost. Nine years later, in 1626, Frater Bernadus carved his name in large block letters into the wooden haikal screen of the Church of St. Antony. "Frater Bernadus a Ferula Siculus de observantia primus visitator Catholicus, sub die 31 decembris 1625, 11 januarii 1626, 31 januarii 1626." There is good reason to believe that the Franciscan friar Bernadus also visited the Monastery of St. Paul, since the three dates may mean, at least, two different arrival dates. The date of the inscription of Bernadus shows clearly 1626 and not 1726 as Jullien has maintained.[65]

---

(61) Alvarez, *Verdadeira Informacao das Terras de Preste Joao, etc.*, in Cerulli, *Etiopi in Palestina*, I, 399.

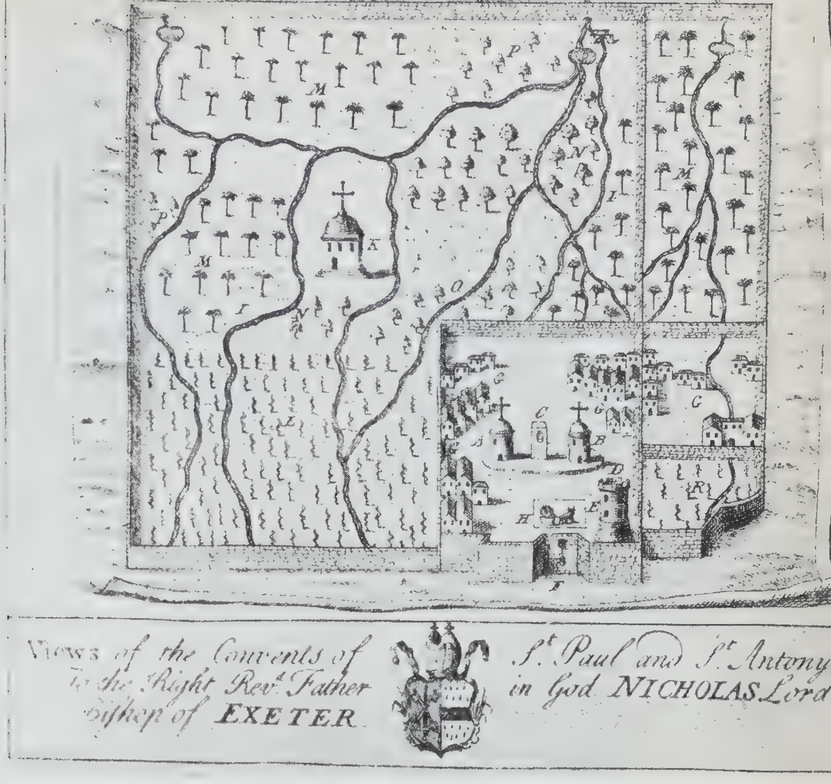
(62) Cerulli, *op. cit.*, II, 419.

(63) Dom Francisque, "Histoire de l'Ethiopie", 289.

(64) Gravit, "Peiresc et les études coptes en France au XVIII siècle," 15.

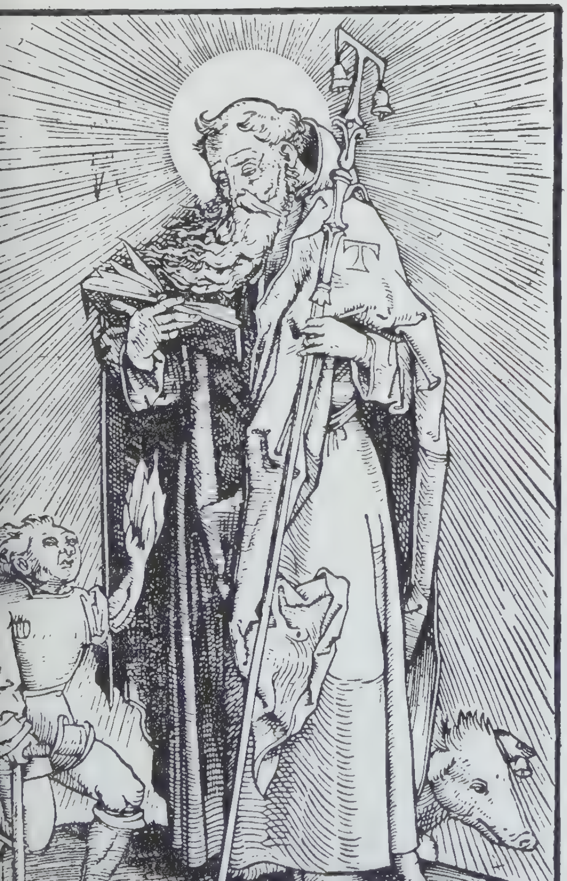
(65) Jullien, *Voyage dans le desert de la Basse-Thébaide aux couvents de St. Antoine et de St. Paul*, 42.

Pococke, Richard, *A Description of the East*, **I, London, Bowyer, 1743.**


Views of the Convents of St. Paul and St. Antony
to the Right Revd. Father in God NICHOLAS Lord
Bishop of EXETER

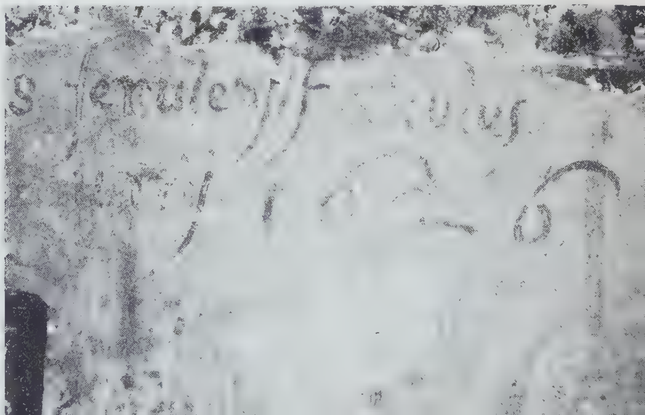
This anonymous sketch shows the following details: (a) the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, (b) the Church of St. Antony, (c) the Belfry, (d) the Tower where they keep their books, (e) the Drawbridge, (f) the Window by which they enter the convent, (g) the Cells of the monks, (h) the Mill, (i) the Garden, (k) the Chapel of St. Mark, (l) the Vineyard, (m) the Palmgroves, (n) the Apricot-vineyard (o) the Caroubi trees, (p) the Olive-yard, (q) and three sources of water.

H. v. Wechtlin, 1517.



St. Antony.

Portion of graffito of Frater Bernadus in Church of St. Antony.



Besides the name and date on the alter screen, we discover another graffito of the same person on the west wall of the Church of St. Antony.

The next traveller to offer more detailed information about the monastery was Fr. J. Coppin who in 1638 set out to call on the monks of both monasteries. The religious evaluation of the "Cophites", as Coppin referred to them, was anything but sympathetic. He saw in them the most absurd and erroneous sect that had separated itself from the Latin Church by following the heresies of Dioscorus and Eutyches,[66] holding at the same time to many Judaistic ceremonies.[67] On the day following his arrival, Coppin witnessed a Coptic service in the monastery in which the priests recited in Syriac (modern authorities believe that the Coptic language was used). In his description of the church, Coppin felt a certain Greek influence, especially in regard to the icons. After the celebration of the Divine Mysteries, he joined the monks in their meal of lentil soup. Later in the day, when visiting the monastery he referred to the three hundred monks who at one time inhabited the monastery, though their cells were destroyed. He only saw those of "quarante et vingt-deux solitaires."[68] One of those very small cells that resemble more a sepulchre than a chamber had been given to his colleague, Fr. Agathangelus, O.F.M. To show the size of the room, Fr. Coppin mentioned its height of four feet, its width of five feet and its length of seven feet. After having visited all parts of the monastery, Coppin and his party climbed the mountain of Clysma to see the cave where St. Antony spent so many days of his life. The purpose of this mission was an attempt by the Latin Church to reunite the Coptic Church with the See of Rome. Fr. Agathangelus stayed at the monastery for a period of four months, conducting doctrinal discussions and giving spiritual conferences. "Two out of fifteen monks were reconciled to the Church... The prospect of the reconciliation of the Coptic Church, was, however, wrecked by the evil conduct of the Latin residents in Egypt, and of the Consul of France in particular." In 1637, Frs. Agathangelus and Cassien left in despair for Ethiopia, where in the following year they were both martyred.[69]

---

(66) This statement concerning Eutyches is due to Fr. Coppin's ignorance, since the Copts condemn the teaching of Eutyches concerning the Nature of Christ as heretical.

(67) Coppin, *Relation des Voyages faits dans la Turquie, la Thébaide, et la Barbarie*, 307.

(68) This could mean 62 or 82 monks.

(69) King, *The Rites of Eastern Christendom*, I, 354; Coppin, *op. cit.*, 275, states that the party concerned visited the monastery in 1638.

It is difficult to ascertain the exact date when the Franciscan missionaries concentrated their efforts on the Monastery of St. Antony. The visits of the Frs. Bernadus, Cassien and Agathangelus may be regarded merely as preparatory to the work that was to be undertaken in the fourth decade of the seventeenth century. To this day, the Latin interest in the Monastery in the 17th century can be seen by the Franciscan Terra Santa Cross above the entrance to the Church of St. Mark.

There is no doubt, that the Monastery of St. Antony was used by the Franciscans as a language-school for the preparation of their missionaries to the Orient. An excerpt of the *MS. Della Minoritica Riforma...* speaks of Fr. Gerard, who went with the companion of the late Capucin to the Desert of the Glorious St. Antony, which is situated about 200 miles from here (Cairo), and 120 miles from the Nile. There, one is pulled up by a windlass in order to enter the monastery, because the doors are very high on account of their fear of wandering robbers. The monastery is large, but rather old and dilapidated. It is beautifully situated, and it is surrounded by a mountain. There is an abundance of water, many palms as well as olive-trees and other fruits. Fr. Gerard was hospitably and warmly received by the monks, who were very poorly dressed, and whose clothes were patched up according to the ancient manner, — they appeared like beggars... They ate vegetables, rice, and they drank water, and they ate only once a day, on fasting days, they ate after sun-set. From the Monastery one can see the shores of the Red Sea, as well as the place where St. Paul the first Hermit used to live.[70]

A letter written by Fr. Andrea d'Arco to the *Propaganda* and dated February 23, 1639, offers the suggestion, to have the *Propaganda* pay the Coptic monks of the Monastery of St. Antony the amount of forty scudi annually, so that two or three Franciscans can reside there for the purpose of studying the Arabic language.[71] One of the students at Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs was Fr. Gerard of Milan, whose report of his impressions of the monastery is cited above.

Fr. Santa dalle Pieve di Sacco of Padua wrote on March 1, 1639 to the secretary of the *Propaganda,* informing him that Fr. Gerard has gone to the Monastery of St. Antony in order to learn the Arabic language.[72] For the Franciscan missionaries there was no better way

---

(70) Golubovich, *Biblioteca Bio-Bibliografica della Terra Santa...*, III, *Etiopia francescana* I, 187.

(71) *Ibid., Etiopia francescana,* I, 217, nota.

(72) *Ibid., Etiopia francescana*, I, 91.

to acquaint themselves with the language than to enter a Coptic monastery. A letter written by Fr. Antonius de Virgoletta to the *Propaganda* (April 18, 1639), requests the authorities to send new missionaries either to the Monastery of St. Macarius or to the Monastery of St. Antony, so that they can learn the Arabic language within seven or eight months, what the friars do not accomplish in seven years.[73]

The result of this strategy is evident from the reports which were sent from Egypt to the ecclesiastical and secular authorities in Europe. Fr. Sylvester of St. Aignam reported in 1651 that even the Coptic Patriarch permitted him to preach in the Coptic Churches,[74] and Fr. Johannes Baptista of St. Aignam sent a detailed account of the mission of the Capucins to the French minister Colbert. In this report he mentioned, that after 1630, the fathers often preached in the churches of the Copts, that they absolved many Copts, including priests and monks.[75]

In the account of their travels. Monceaux and Laisné mention the fact that many European travellers have visited the Monastery of St. Antony, from which they have removed many valuable manuscripts. "If they were to return by the Red Sea, they would see in passing Mount Sinai, which is only two days from Tor, a little town on the eastern shore of the sea. They could interest the monks and for money have a part of their books which are buried beneath dust, and which for as much as they know about them are all original through the great care which Justinian took according to the report of Procopius[76] to furnish their library. One must not expect to get any at all from the Monastery of St. Antony and the Monastery of St. Macarius, for they have all been carried off by the Venetians, the English and the Flamish,

---

(73) *Ibid., Etiopia francescana*, I, 92.

(74) Ignazio da Seggiano, *Documenti inediti sull' apostolato Minori Cappuccini nel Vicino Oriente*, (1623-1683), 142.

(75) Rabbath, *Documents inédits pour servir à l'histoire du Christianisme en Orient*, I, 510. — This was done in spite of the prohibition of the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, which prohibited the *communicatio in sacris cum dissidentibus* on March 21, 1627. Non debere Missionarios divina celebrare in ecclesiis, in quibus simul haeretici sua profana et sacrilega exercitia habent. Ut tamen catholicis fiat satis, super altaribus portatilibus in privatis domibus positis, sacrum peragendum esse; (De Vries, "Das Problem der Communicatio in sacris cum dissidentibus.")

(76) Procopius of Caesarea was a famous Byzantine historian, who lived from 542 A. D. onwards in Constantinople.

who were interested in them before us."[77]

On the third of October 1672, Johann Michael Wansleben[78] arrived at the Monastery of St. Antony, after having passed by the Dependency in the village of Bûsh which is to the south of the Nile. In the description of his impressions he says that the monastery encloses another one which years ago was inhabited by the Ethiopians, which now, however, is completely ruined.[79] The monastery is built in a large square on the site of Mount Clysma which extends from the East to the South. It is surrounded by a weak and ruined wall which is incapable of offering any protection, because it is very old and built of mud-bricks. The wall has no door, and everyone who wants to enter the monastery is pulled up by a pulley, this goes for men as well as for animals. The circle of the walls is very large and encloses 600 feddans or 2,400 *arpens de terre*. Comparing the monks of the Levant with those in Europe, Wansleben points out that the latter live in individual cells which are more beautiful and comfortable. The cells of the monastery are extremely small and poorly made of yellow sand and without wood, without symmetry, order and any paint. They are so small and so low that one can easily touch the ceiling, and because of this smallness, the monks cannot even stand up in their rooms. Their refectory is a very dirty and dark place. Only for visitors, the monks have an apartment which is fairly large and which has two adjoining rooms.

There is in the monastery a great abundance of water which is clear like crystal and cool, but very salty. This water has its source in the Mount Qalzam which lies behind the monastery.[80] The monastery has three churches. The main church is that of St. Antony which is the oldest one, and according to the monks, the same church which St. Antony built. It is the only thing in the whole monastery that was spared from the rage of the Arabs. The church is decorated

---

(77) Monceaux et Laisné, "Mission de M.M. de Monceaux et Laisné, voyages de vaillant en Orient (1667-1675)." Omont, *Missions Archéologiques Françaises...*, I, 35. Tûr is a dependency of the Monastery of St. Catherine.

(78) Johann Michael Wansleben was the son of a Lutheran minister. He was sent by the Duke of Saxony-Gotha on a mission to Ethiopia. On his return he became a Dominican friar and was commissioned to the Orient by Colbert, the political adviser of King Louis XIV.

(79) Wansleben, *Nouvelle Relation en forme de Journal, d'un voyage fait en Egypte en 1672 et 1673*, 302.

(80) Wansleben says about the water : "They drink it, it is not very wholesome, chiefly for those who are not accustomed to it ; for the Nitre which infects it, causeth Bladders to rise under the skin, and torments such as drink of it with itching, as I have found by experience."

with paintings which are very antiquated and extremely simple. The smoke of incense which is burnt there every day has rendered the pictures almost as black as a chimney. Near this church is that of St. Peter and St. Paul which has a small steeple and a small handbell. The third church is in the garden and is dedicated to a lay-member of the monastery, called Mark.

The rule of the monks obliges them to give up marriage, all carnal desires and the relationships to their parents, furthermore they are not to possess anything, they are to live in the desert, to abstain from meat and wine. They are obliged to sleep on the ground, except the superiors and the sick. Finally, they are bound to recite the Canonical Hours, and before retiring at night they prostrate themselves one hundred and fifty times, these prostrations are called μετάνοια.[81] They have never more than one meal a day, except on Saturdays and Sundays, when they have two meals. While they are not permitted to eat meat in the monastery, they are allowed to eat it outside the monastery walls. As for fish they rarely eat it because of the great distance between the Nile and the monastery. They do not obtain any fish from the Red Sea because they do not have the instruments for fishing and, in addition, all roads to the Red Sea are dangerous because they are inhabited by Arab thieves. The monks do not engage in studies, and they seem to be satisfied with the reading of devotional books, the *Synaxarium*, *The Paradise of the Fathers* and others.[82]

In the tower or keep there is the library with three or four cases full of ancient Arabic and Coptic manuscripts, containing also devotional and church books. Most of these manuscripts were worthy to be placed in a royal library. There are two books, which Wansleben mentions especially, a Coptic Grammar and a Coptic-Arabic Dictionary, and a work by Ibn al-'Assal. After having spent two weeks at the monastery, Wansleben departed from there on October 17 in the direction of Banî Suîf and Bûsh.[83]

Twenty years after Wansleben's visit, de Maillet called on the Monastery of St. Antony in 1692.[84] Like Wansleben, de Maillet observed in the neighbourhood of St. Antony's Monastery the ruins of another monastery as well as numerous caves. He too referred to the Dependency in so far as he mentioned that the monks receive their provisions from time to time. The monastery was enclosed by good walls which

---

(81) *Ibid.*, 305.

(82) *Ibid.*, 311.

(83) *Ibid.*, 321.

(84) De Maillet, *Description de l'Egypte*, 319-324.

safeguard the monks from the assaults of the Arabs, and the only way to enter the monastery was by pulley. In the monastery garden there were many palm-trees as well as other fruit trees. The water of the well, however, was somehow brackish, though it was used by the monks for drinking and irrigation purposes.[85]

The following year, de Maillet, in a letter dated September 17, 1693, pointed out to the antiquarian J.P. Rigord, commissaire de la marine at Marseille, the usefulness of drawing up a general map of Egypt and the advantage that one might derive from a visit to the libraries of the monasteries of St. Antony and St. Macarius in Egypt, as well as that of Mount Sinai.[86]

The next traveller to visit the Monastery of St. Antony, was Fr. Antoine-Marie Nacchi, S.J., who was born in Cyprus and returned to the East in 1697, and who was at the time of his death General Superior of the Missions in the Levant in 1746. He wrote to the General of the Jesuits in Rome a letter dated from Cairo, May 20, 1698, of which Fr. Léonard de Saint-Catherine has preserved for us a copy in his collection. "Having been in Egypt in the Upper Thebaid in the ancient Monastery of St. Antony the Abbot, I saw also a room full of ancient manuscripts of the monks and Alexandrian Saints and heretics, but I am not able to use them because they are written in the Egyptian and Coptic letters, which language is lost, which I think could show and recover the fine memory, but what is lacking is the Oedipus of the Sphinx."[87]

On order of Louis XIV, Paul Lucas travelled in 1714 through the lands of the Levant.[88] Coming from the Fayyûm he visited the Thebaid which was well known for its numerous solitaries who had retired in that desert. There he observed the cave, and, in particular, the Monastery of St. Antony, which was occupied by Coptic monks who lived there in great austerity. Their fear of the Arabs forced them to build around themselves walls through which one cannot enter except by using the pulley. Devotions, manual work and the cultivation of their palms constitute the main occupation of these monks.

In 1716, an anonymous person made a sketch of the Antonian monastery which he dedicated to the Right Reverend Father in God, Ni-

---

(85) *Ibid.*, 321.

(86) Omont, *Missions Archéologiques Françaises en Orient aux XVII et XVIII siècles*, I, 283.

(87) Omont, *op. cit.*, II, 1208, (MS. franc. 20310, fol. 115, Bib. Nat.).

(88) Paul Lucas, *Voyage du Sieur Paul Lucas fait en 1714 par ordre de Louis XIV*, III, 149.

cholas, Lord Bishop of Exeter. This sketch, which Pococke discovered in a manuscript map, was included in his *Description of the East.*[89]

On May 23, 1716, Frs. Claude Sicard and J.S. Assemani departed from Old Cairo on their visit to the Red Sea monasteries.[90] Travelling south along the Nile, they turned into the desert at Banî Suîf and arrived at the monastery on May 28. On their arrival, they were greeted by the hegoumenos of the monastery who conducted them to the church for prayers. After that, they were welcomed and offered a glass of wine and a cup of coffee, then they visited the monastery. Describing the monastery, Fr. Sicard notices two churches or better two chapels which are twenty or thirty feet long. One of the churches is dedicated to SS. Peter and Paul, while the other church is dedicated to St. Antony. The two churches are attached to each other by a small corridor. There were thirty cells in the monastery which were separated from each other, and were arranged in little streets. The cells, the offices and the streets offer the impression of a little town which is located in the desert. The monastery has a very large garden which the monks cultivate. They plant dates, olives, lentils, apricots and other fruits and vegetables and also two vine-yards. Speaking of the water, Fr. Sicard considers it clear though salty but not dangerous for one's health.[91] In the centre of the garden is a little church, dedicated to St. Mark, the hermit and disciple of St. Antony. In his description of the monastic life at Mount Clysma, Fr. Sicard mentions the presence of fifteen monks. As it was his mission, Fr. Sicard engaged in theological debates with the hegoumenos of the monastery who was the "superieur general" not only of the Monastery of St. Antony, but also of that of St. Paul. Fr. Sicard noticed three cases of books and his companion, Assemani, secured a few volumes from them for the Vatican Library.

After having gone to and returned from the Monastery of St. Paul, Fr. Sicard climbed the Mount of Clysma to visit the cave of St. Antony where he celebrated the Holy Mass. Accompanied by Abûnâ Synnodius, they first stopped at the cave of St. Paul the Simple. From the balcony of the cave of St. Antony, Abûnâ Synnodius pointed to other caves which were located beyond that of St. Antony's. On their trip down to the monastery, Fr. Sicard engaged again in theological debates thus fulfilling his mission of the Church.[92] The fact that numerous

---

(89) Pococke, *A Description of the East*, 128.

(90) Sicard, *Description de l'Egypte*, III, 280.

(91) *Ibid.*, 288.

(92) *Ibid.*, 304.

missionaries of the various Latin orders had attempted to convert the monks of the Monastery of St. Antony led Anbâ Yûsâb, the Bishop of Girga and Achmîn, to write some 31 articles in defense of the Coptic faith. Yûsâb, who had lived for many years as a monk at the Monastery of St. Antony, received his episcopal consecration in 1791.[93]

On April 9, 1730, at ten o'clock in the morning, Tourtechot de Granger arrived at the monastery where he was taken up by the pulley.[94] He mentions that he saw 28 cells, the refectory and two small and obscure churches, the one being dedicated to SS. Peter and Paul, and the other to St. Antony. In his description of the garden, Granger mentions the Church of St. Mark the Hermit which had two altars. The monastic community was composed of 25 monks of whom 12 were priests.[95] Their provisions, Granger continues, were provided for the monks from the village of Bouche (Bûsh) which is situated west of the Nile.

Though Richard Pococke did not visit the Monastery of St. Antony personally, he related in 1737 what he had heard from a monk of this monastery who was temporarily staying in a monastery in the Fayyûm. The entrance to the monastery is by a window, as at Mount Sinai. "The patriarch is head of the convent of St. Antony, I know not whether it is always so, or that the patriarch being chosen from there, might have presided over this convent, and continue to do so ; he has a deputy there. There are three other persons who have a share in the government of the convent, four more that are priests, and twenty-three that are lay monks. The deputy they call Rubeti, the three next Gumous, the priests Keshiesh, and the others Ruban... They have three springs of water running into the convent, that are a little salt. And it is probable that in these convents are the only bells in Egypt."[96]

In the latter part of the 18th century, the monastery underwent several changes. In 1766, the Church of St. Mark was rebuilt and in 1733 Lutfallah Shâkir restored the Church of the Apostles. In 1783, Ibrâhîm Gawharî renovated the walls of the monastery.[97] The building activity within the monastery walls no doubt attracted visitors to come and see the many renovations. Thus an Armenian graffito

---

(93) Graf, *Gesch. d. christl. arab. Lit.*, IV. 138.

(94) Granger, *Relation du Voyage fait en Egypte, en l'année 1730*, 97-121.

(95) *Ibid.*, 111.

(96) Pococke, *op. cit.*, 128.

(97) Al-Mu'allim Ibrahim al-Gawharî also built the Church of St. Mercurius in the Hârat Zuwaila (north-east district of Cairo). Burmester, *Guide to the Ancient Coptic Churches of Cairo*, 73.

placed on the north wall of the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary informs us that in 1765, the Doctor of Theology, Sarqis of Hadjen (Sarquis vartabed hagentsi), was in the monastery.

Coming from the Fayyûm and travelling via Bûsh and Iftîh across the desert, Nicholas Savary arrived in 1777 at Mount Qalzam, where he entered the monastery by a pulley. These precautions, he notices, are necessary because of the Arabs. In describing the water conditions he speaks of a canal through which the water runs from the mountain to the monastery. The water is a little salty but satisfies the needs of life. The monks exhibit a great admiration for the cave of St. Antony which is obscurely hidden in the mountain.[98]

Still to this day, the monks refer to the hardships which their predecessors must have experienced in the days of 1805 when persecution fell upon the monks of the monastery and when the caravans ceased to come from Bûsh. A few years of Mohammad 'Alî's rule, however, apparently restored order to the desert.

6. The 19th and 20th Century Travellers

Writing in 1817, Count de Forbin made only a passing reference to the Monasteries of St. Antony and St. Paul. "A few Coptic monks inhabit these two convents, held in such veneration by the Christians. Lofty walls afford protection from the incursions of the Bedouins, as well as from the tigers which swarm in those dreary solitudes. An aqueduct, much impaired, conveys some brackish water to irrigate their garden, some trees and leguminous plants."[99]

In 1834, a Russian traveller, Avraam Norov, visited Egypt and went to the Coptic monastery of St. Antony on the Western Bank of the Nile, which served as an intermediate station between the valley of the Nile and the famous monastery of the same name near the shore of the Red Sea. Norov describes this second monastery as situated on a high rock, surrounded by a high wall with one window only, through which the traveller is lifted up with a rope fastened to a board or to a basket. It is obvious, however, that Norov did not visit the monastery, and that he described it merely from hearsay.[100]

On March 13, 1839, Dr. Tattam and his step-daughter, Miss Platt, were hospitably received by the monks of the Monastery of St. Antony.

---

(98) Savary, *Lettres sur l'Egypte*, II, 57.

(99) Forbin, *Travels in Egypt in 1817-18*, 31.

(100) Norov, *Puteshestviye po Yegiptu i Nubii v 1834-35*, quoted by Piankoff, *Two Descriptions by Russian Travellers of the Monasteries of St. Antony and St. Paul*, 62.

Dr. Tattam was permitted to examine the library, where he found a Selim, similar to one he had procured in Cairo, two copies of the Pentateuch, two of the Minor Prophets, one of Job, one of Isaiah, and a copy of the Revelation and the New Testament, but none of these books was he able to obtain. Dr. Tattam brought with him a letter of introduction from the Coptic Patriarch, which the monks respectfully kissed, both before and after reading it, and one of them stuck it in his turban. After visiting the library, Dr. Tattam went through "the two pretty gardens, in which there are apricot-trees, the date-palm, olive trees, vines and plenty of vegetables. The gardens are well irrigated by means of furrows; and there are two large cisterns within the walls to receive the water that descends from the mountain immediately above." The same day, Dr. Tattam departed for the Monastery of St. Paul.[101]

Sir Gardner Wilkinson went to the Monastery of St. Antony in 1843. "It is about 76-77 miles from the Nile and the road presents nothing worthy of remark until you reach that building. It is inhabited by Copts and their principal saint is St. George of Cappadocia, but their patron saint is St. Antony of the Thebaid... Dayr Antonius is 17 or 18 miles from the sea and it may be considered the principal monastery in Egypt, and its importance is much increased since the election of the patriarch has been transferred to it from those at the Natron lakes..."[102] Sir Gardner tried in vain to learn something about the dictionary for Coptic and Arabic, which Wansleben saw in the library and identified as having been written by Ibn al-'Assâl, and which he valued at 30 crowns.[103]

Then in 1850, the Russian Archimandrite, Porphyrius Uspensky, who had travelled to the East looking for valuable manuscripts, came to Egypt, where he conceived the idea of a union between the Russian Orthodox Church and that of the Jacobite Copts. He believed that he had discovered that the latter form of creed was not a heresy and that a union of the two churches was quite possible from a theological point of view.[104] Accompanied by the abbot of the monastery, Qummus Dâûd, the future famous Patriarch Cyril IV, Porphyrius visited the Monastery of Mount Clysma. His journey to the monastery is written up in his book *Puteshestviye po Egiptu i v monastyri*

---

(101) Platt, *Journal of a Tour through Egypt*, II, 93. A selim is a mediaeval Coptic-Arabic vocabulary.

(102) Wilkinson, *Modern Egypt and Thebes*, II, 381.

(103) *Cf.* p. 52.

(104) Piankoff, *op. cit.*, 63.

Sviatago Antonia Velikago i Prepadobnago Pavla Fiveyskago v 1850 godu. In his book he relates that, as in all Egyptian monasteries, the buildings are grouped together in the north-west corner. In addition to the narrow, gloomy and untidy cells of the monks scattered without order, the main buildings are the Cathedral Church with the adjoining Church of St. Antony, the vestry and the library in the crenellated tower, the dining hall, a store-house three stories high, a little house for the patriarch, an isolated church dedicated to St. Mark in the north-east corner of the garden, and the well.

In his description of the Church of St. Antony, Porphyrius writes that under the three steps that lead into the passage before the altar, there is the grave of St. Antony. "But they (the monks) are not sure themselves, whether this grave contains the relics of the Saint or not... Adjoining to the south-western part of this church is a little chapel, quite dark, in the name of the four beasts which in Jeremiah represent symbolically four evangelists.[105] In the lower, north part of the garden, stands quite separately the church dedicated to St. Mark, who according to the reckoning of the Copts, lived 500 years ago... A coffin of the Abyssinian Bishop Mark is shown there. He alone came back from Ethiopia, all the rest had died and were buried there."[106] A graffito of his name placed by the Russian archimandrite on the west wall of the Church of St. Antony still testifies to the visit.

In July 1851, Cardinal Gugliemo Massaia, O.F.M., travelled in the company of a young monk and three other persons by camel to the Wâdî 'Arabah. The purpose of the visit of the Cardinal was to "liberate" a certain young man by the name of Michelangelo, who, according to the Cardinal's version, lived as a prisoner in the Monastery of Anbâ Antûnîûs. Michelangelo, a young Copt, had studied in Rome and had become a pupil of the Congregation of Propaganda. On his return to Cairo he was supposedly taken prisoner by some Coptic monks and sent to the Monastery of St. Antony. When Cardinal Massaia, who was just passing through Egypt on his way to Abyssinia, heard about this young man, he decided to look into the matter.

Having arrived at the monastery, the Cardinal changed his identity and assumed the name of Mr. George Bartorelli. The party was pulled up by the windlass and then entered the monastery, where the Cardinal was introduced to Michelangelo. Much distressed about his

---

(105) The Living Bodiless Creatures are mentioned in *Is.* 6:1-3, *Ezek.* 1:4-8, *Apocalypse* 4: 2-8.

(106) Uspensky, *Puteshestivie po Egiptu i v monastyri Sviatago Antonia Velikago i Prepadobnago Pavla Fiveyskago v 1850 godu*, quoted by Piankoff, *op. cit.*, 65.

life at St. Antony's, the young Italian-speaking Copt-Catholic made his confession to the Cardinal stating, among other things, that for two years he had not received the Holy Sacrament.

The Cardinal then visited the churches and the various buildings of the monastery including the library which was located in the qasr. Here he saw four or five baskets containing valuable books in Coptic and in Arabic, though he was told that a certain Frenchman had bought a great deal of their library treasures. Then he went to see the refectory which was still being used by the monks, while he was told that the monks at Dair Anbâ Bûlâ did not eat together.

Near the Church of St. Antony, the Cardinal noticed a little room (casotto), where according to his observations the monks and the servants take a complete bath before saying the Mass. This place, therefore, was referred to as the Place of Purification.

The Cardinal spent the night in what he called the Sepulchre of St. Antony, a crypt which was the cleanest place, and also the best place to converse with Michelangelo. Among other things of interest he was shown the cell of Anbâ Andarâûs who was at that time bishop in Abyssinia. His name was written in English and Italian on the door of his room. The hegoumenos of the monastery, Abûnâ Dâûd, was not present at the time of his visit, for he was in Abyssinia preaching against the activities of Cardinal Massaia, who had previously conducted a mission in that country.

The most curious observation of this peculiar visit was in connection with the spring of St. Antony. He was told by the monks that St. Antony had blessed the water, and had thus given it power to purify the souls and minds of those who drink from it. But experience had taught them that drinking the water without a certain medicine added to it could be disastrous. This medicine had to remain in the water for a period of three days, otherwise the person drinking from the spring would be changed into a woman. Finally, the Cardinal promised the monks some medicine which he wanted to obtain from Cairo, provided they would permit the Italian speaking Michelangelo to accompany him, and then to return to the monastery with the promised medicine. When Cardinal Massaia and Michelangelo had left the monastery, they went to Banî Suîf, where Michelangelo contacted the French consulate.[107]

That the monastery has played an important part in the general history of the Coptic Church can be seen from the large number of

---

(107) Massaia, *I mei 35 anni di missione nell'Alta Etiopia*, II, 21 f.

patriarchs who have come from Mount Clysma. The leadership of the Antonian monastery becomes especially noticeable during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Twelve Antonian monks ascended the Patriarchal Throne, and for almost 300 years they thus determined the history of the church. This means that next to Dair Abû Maqâr, which provided twenty-nine patriarchs, Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs had an important share in the provision of Coptic leadership.

Anbâ Murqus VIII (1796-1809) was patriarch at the time when Napoleon invaded Egypt. The 109th Patriarch, Anbâ Butrus VII (1809-1852), came also from the Mountain of Clysma where he had lived as Abûnâ Mercurius.

More important for the development of the Coptic Church, however, was another Antonian monk, who after only two years of service in the monastery was elected hegoumenos. He is known as "the Reformer of the Church" or Anbâ Kîrillus IV (1852-1861). His major improvements were in the field of education. As hegoumenos he had founded a school at the Dependency at Bûsh where the Antonian monks could engage in Coptic and Arabic studies. His life as patriarch is one of the fullest and most fascinating biographies that the Coptic Church has provided and it is very likely that this dynamic personality did not die a natural death. As Strothmann says: "Gift war im Orient kein seltenes staatliches Mittel." [108]

In May 1859, the monastery was visited by Callinicus, the 80th Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Alexandria, who had ascended the Patriarchial Throne just a year prior to his visit. A graffito placed on the north wall of the Church of St. Antony informs us that the Patriarch travelled in company of Gabriel of Hiero...

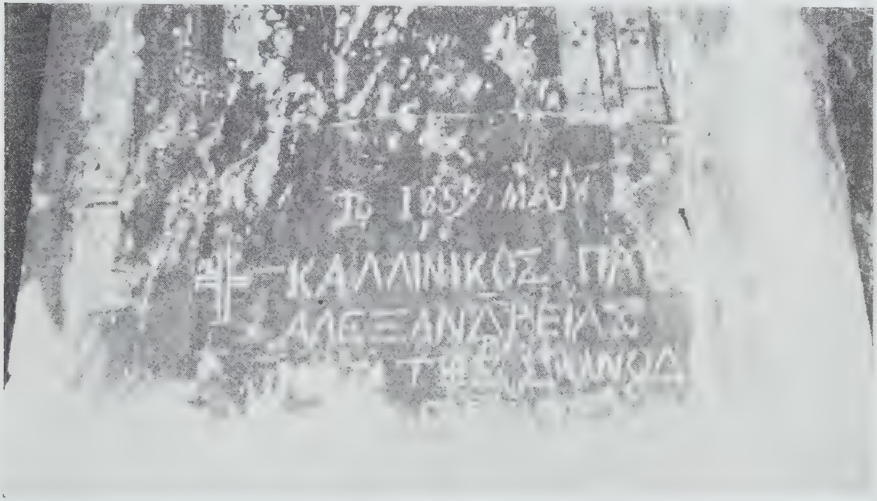
In 1873, Greville J. Chester went to the Wâdî ʻArabah to visit the Antonian Monastery. At the time of his visit, travellers were still being pulled up by rope and basket, though not many travellers could have visited the monastery in those days, for Chester states explicitly that it had not been called upon by more than one or two Europeans in his generation. He saw three churches besides the new Church of Al-ʻAdhrâ. About the Church of St. Mark he says that it is dedicated to a brother of that name, who used to live in the monastery in ancient times, and whose body is preserved in the church. In the qaṣr, he was shown the library, which consisted of some books which deserve examination, an ancient Abyssinian shield of hippopotamus hide, a

---

(108) Strothmann, *Die Koptische Kirche in der Neuzeit*, 31.

cross, a very ancient bronze lamp and a silvermounted umbrella which was held over the silver gospel-case on the occasion of the annual processon to the cave of St. Antony.[109]

That the monastery was visited off and on by tourists is evident from the register that the monks used to keep in the second half of the 19th century. Fr. Jullien records that in June, 1871, the monastery was visited by Colonel d'état-majeur Pindy and his officers, and that an Englishman called on the monks in January 1875.[110]



Graffito of the Greek Patriarch Callinicus in the Church of St. Antony.

When Dr. Georg Schweinfurth visited the monastery in 1876 and again in 1877, he records that only very seldom European travellers had called on the monks, and he bemoans the fact that those who did visit the monastery inscribed their names, without any consideration of the valuable wall paintings of the Church of St. Antony and that neither Greek patriarchs nor Russian archimandrites were any exception to the rule.[111] Writing in a very delightful manner, Dr. Schweinfurth adds

---

(109) Chester, "Notes on the Coptic Dayrs of the Wadi Natroun and on the Dayr Antonios in the Eastern desert," 105 f.

(110) Jullien, *op. cit.*, 70.

(111) Schweinfurth, *Auf Unbetretenen Wegen*, 173.

that the monastery spreads over six hectars and is enclosed by a wall which is 1120 m. long. The altitude of the monastery is 410 m. above the level of the Red Sea, at least this was the result of the measurements taken by Dr. Guessfeldt. Like all other travellers, Schweinfurth was pulled up by the pulley to the wall, from where he could see the monastic buildings and an area spread out beneath. He visited the three churches, and the garden, and describes in detail his many observations which, however, would add nothing to our knowledge. Apparently, he was not shown the library, and, therefore, comes to the conclusion that the monastery did not possess one. He then continues his story by describing the well with its very salty water to which a stranger has difficulties in getting accustomed. Then he went to the cave of the Saint. He expresses his feelings that every traveller ought to visit it, though, at the same time, he adds that there is little that attracts one's attention.[112]

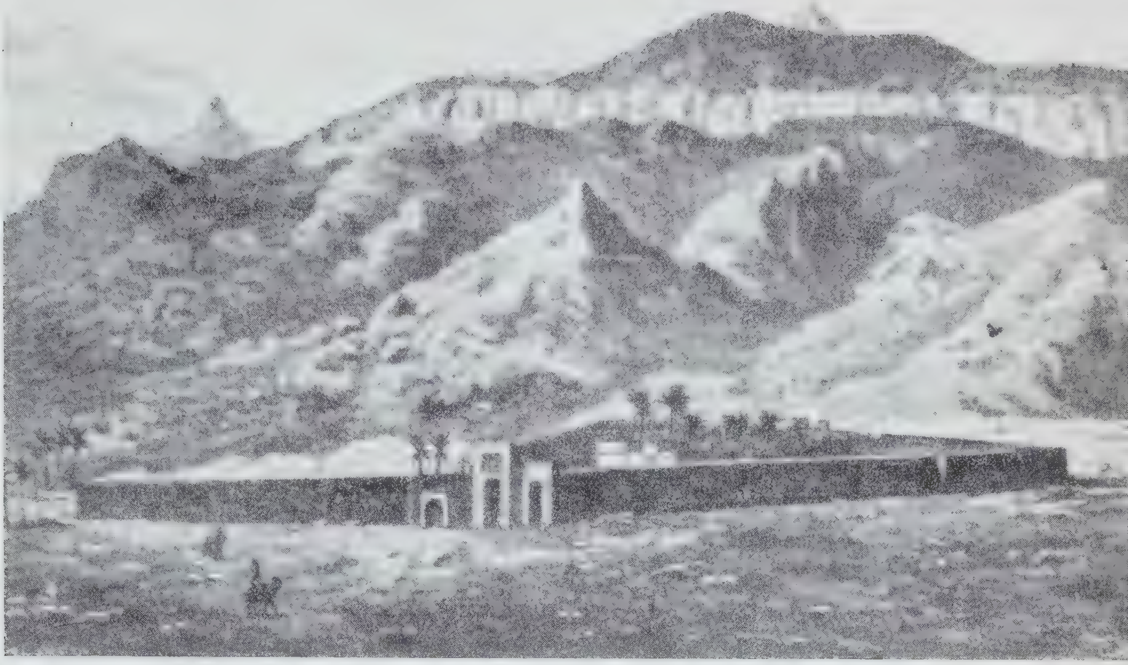
In November 1883, Fr. Michel Jullien, S.J., Rector of the College of the Holy Family in Cairo, accompanied by Mgr. François Sogaro, Apostolic Vicar of the Coptic Catholic Church, and Fr. Luigi Korrat and Mr. Sante Bonavia visited both monasteries of the Thebaid. Travelling via Bûsh, where the party visited the Dependency, Fr. Jullien followed the caravan route to the monastery, and arrived there after several days of desert travel. After having been welcomed by the monks in front of the monastery, they entered it by pulley and were introduced to the hegoumenos, an old monk of 70 years. Then, Fr. Jullien describes how he went up to the 10-12 m. high walls, while discussing theology with the monks, for this had been one of the main purposes of his journey. Following his visit to the churches of the monastery, Fr. Jullien retraced the steps of Fr. Sicard by ascending the Mountain of Clysma in order to visit the cave of St. Antony.[113]

In November 1901, the monastery was visited by an extraordinary party of diplomats. With a letter of recommendation from the patriarch, Anbâ Kîrillus V, His Excellency George Cogordan, French Ambassador to Egypt, Mr. Auguste Boppe, Mr. Lovier Taigny and Mr. Leon Ouerry went via Banî Suîf to the desert monastery, where they arrived on the 25th of November. Having settled in the monastery, Cogordan pointed out the intimate relationship of France to the Saint of the Desert. He recalled the popularity and the fame of St. Antony in France during the Middle Ages, and presented to the monks of the monastery a large case with an exact reproduction of the painting of

---

(112) Schweinfurth, *op. cit.*, 185.

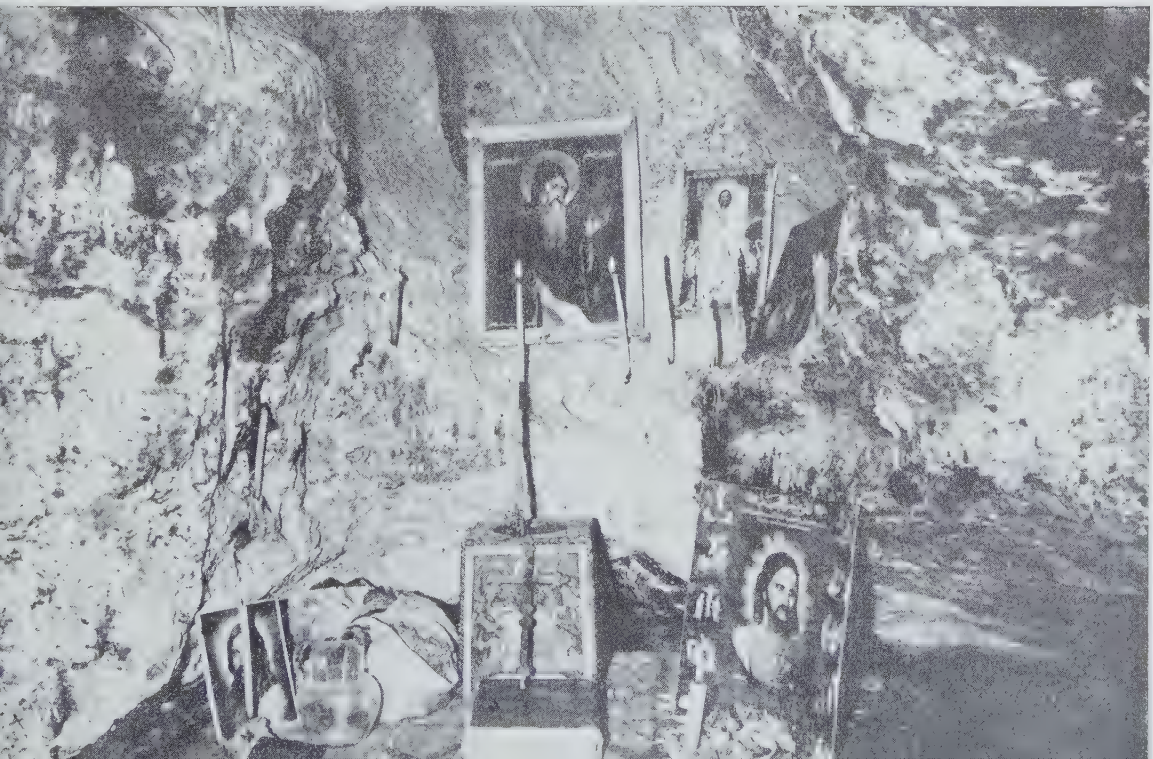
(113) Jullien, *op. cit.*, 41.



Jullien, 1883

Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs

The Interior of the Cave of St. Antony in 1960.



St. Antony by Velazquez which Mr. Boppe and Mr. Taigny had brought along from France. This picture was placed in the Church of St. Antony, where it still hangs.

At the time of their visit, the monastery had regained its momentum, and Cogordan relates that it was inhabited by 41 monks of whom 30 were hieromonks. This is more than twice the number mentioned by Wansleben in 1672 or Fr. Sicard in 1711.[114]

Cogordan described the monastic life and states that the monks follow the rule of celebrating their offices three times a day, at four o'clock in the morning, before midday and before sunset only. The protectiveness of the monks towards their library at that time is also implied by the account of Cogordan. He inquired about the library, but was told the story of its destruction by the Bedouins. At the end of his visit, Cogordan visited the cave of St. Antony, where in 1711 Fr. Sicard, and 170 years later Fr. Jullien and Mgr. Sogaro, had celebrated the Holy Mass.[115]

Agnes Smith Lewis and her sister Mrs. Margaret Dunlop Gibson may well have been the first women to visit the Coptic desert monasteries of the Red Sea.[116] In February 1904, they contracted with a certain Mr. Sulaimân Mûsâ, a young Copt from the Fayyûm, to take them with every possible comfort to the two monasteries in the Thebaid.[117] They obtained their permission to visit the Monastery of St. Antony from the hegoumenos who resided in Bûsh. Having arrived at the Monastery of Anbâ Antûnîûs, an exception was made with regard to their entrance to it, for the ladies were not pulled up by a rope and a windlass, as all the other visitors. They entered through a small and narrow door, which was opened only once every year, or when the patriarch visited the monastery.[118] As they stepped across the threshold, Agnes Smith Lewis writes, "we had the unique feeling that we were breaking the tradition of 1600 years." The lady visitors were shown around the garden and the churches and then received the permission to examine the manuscripts of the monastery which were kept in a small room behind the sanctuary in a little church. There they found Coptic and Syriac Bibles, as well as recent publications of the patriarchal press and books from the American Presbyterian Mission. The ancient copies caught their special attention, one

---

(114) Cogordan, *Relations du voyage fait au couvent de St. Antoine...*, 72.

(115) *Ibid.*, 124.

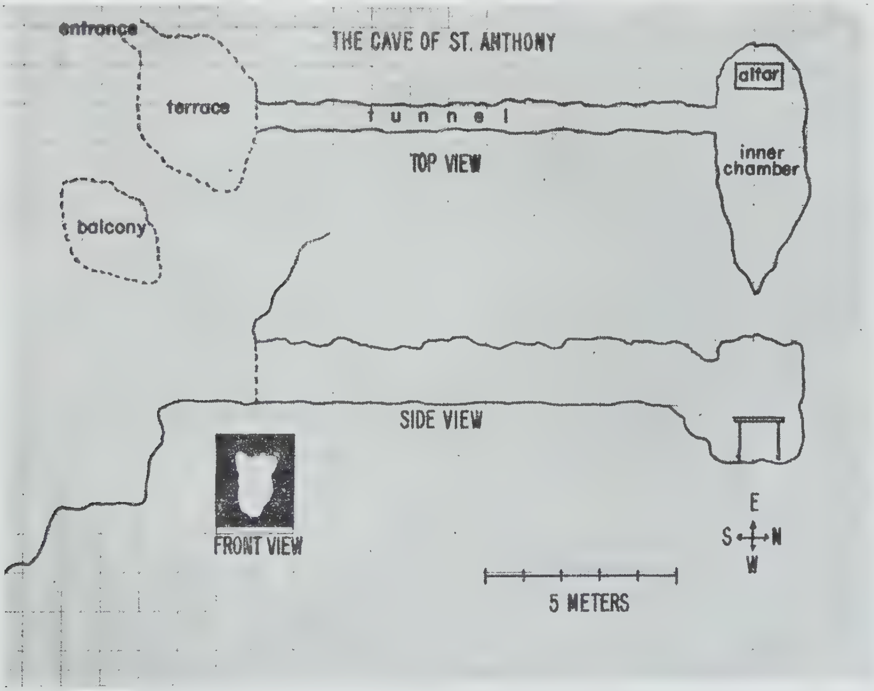
(116) Miss Platt accompanied Dr. Tattam on his visit to the Monastery, yet we know nothing of her visit.

(117) Lewis, "Hidden Egypt", 746.

(118) *Ibid.*, 749.

was the *Didascalia Sanctorum Apostolorum* in Arabic, the other was a copy of the romance of Barlaam and Josaphat.

At 4 p.m. on the same day, they decided to climb Mount Clysma and to visit the cave of St. Antony. "One wriggles with difficulty into a circular chamber nearly filled with an altar of rock and earth, on which the guide had placed a taper, to the right of this is a hole where the saint slept." The party returned just prior to sunset. They left the monastery at 7:30 p.m. in the direction of the Red Sea, and camped in the Wâdî 'Arabah so as to be ready for the following day's journey to the Monastery of St. Paul.[119]



Plan of the Cave of St. Antony.

It was on the 13th of March, 1928, that Johann Georg, Duke of Saxony, and Professor Sauer started on their expedition to the Red Sea Monastery of St. Antony. Travelling with a 16 h.p. Renault, they drove south of Cairo along the Nile to Kuraimât and from there eastwards into the Wâdî 'Arabah. Because of several flat tires and other mishaps, the distinguished party arrived at the monastery late at night and on foot. The following morning, the Duke visited the Church

---

(119) *Ibid.*, 751.

of St. Antony where he attended the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. He placed the date of the construction of the church in the seventh century and, interestingly enough, believed the monks' story about St. Antony's tomb in the western part of the Church. According to Johann Georg, the destruction of the monastery took place in 1517,[120] rather than in the end of the 15th century as it is generally assumed. In this connection, it might be well to substantiate the traditional date for the destruction of the monastery by a colophon of 1506 belonging to a gospel in the Vatican Library. "...the monastery of our holy father Antûnîûs, known as the monastery of Al-'Arabah in the desert of Al-Kulzum inhabited by monks, was vacant without residents, ravaged by the Arabs, and this book was then taken from the hands of the Arabs, who then ravaged the place utterly." [121]

After leaving the Church of St. Antony, the Duke went to the Church of SS. Peter and Paul which, according to his judgment, was built in the 17th century. From there he went to a certain church which was built by Anbâ Kîrillus in or around 1859, but which had not been completed, for even the altar was missing, and for this reason the church had not been named after a patron saint. At this time, the church was being used to dry olives. The fourth church, which is dedicated to St. Mark, is only vaguely mentioned by the Duke, and the icons in this church, as in most of the sanctuaries, he considered worthless. In the qasr he discovered several icons. Upon request, the hegoumenos Abûna Surîân al-Antûnî, presented him with the most valuable icon of the whole collection, a 13th century painting of the Blessed Virgin Mary.[122] The day before, he had received a beautiful T-staff of olivewood.

At the time of his visit the monastery was inhabited by 18 monks, though he was told that 80 monks stayed at the Dependency in Bûsh. His final judgment, however, is interesting. Even if Dair as-Surîân is artistically more advanced and richer in treasures, the Monastery of St. Antony seems to him to be the wealthiest monastery which he had seen in the Orient. [123]

In September 1929, Marcus Simaika completed the cataloguing of the manuscripts and books at Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs and stipulated that they might be studied only in the library and that under no circumstances were they to be removed.

---

(120) Johann Georg, *Neue Streifzüge durch die Kirchen and Klöster Aegyptens*, 32-43.

(121) Horner, *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Northern Dialect*, I, lxv.

(122) Johann Georg, *op. cit.*, 51.

(123) *Ibid.*, 43.

In 1930 and 1931, the Byzantine Institute of America sent at great cost two winter expeditions to the monastery in order to study the archaeology and the history of the place. The expeditions were composed of Prof. Thomas Whittemore, the architect Oliver Barker, the artist Netchetailor, the photographer Kazazian and Prof. Piankoff. In addition to identifying and photographing the wall-paintings in the Church of St. Antony, Prof. Whittemore photographed the famous Difnar of the 14th century which is in the monastery library.[124] The findings, based on an exhaustive examination *in situ,* on published works and on numerous unpublished texts and manuscripts, were to be published. So far I have not been able to locate the results of this expedition.[125]

One of the first visitors to reach the monastery by automobile via Suez — 'Ain Sukhnah — Za'frânah was Fr. A. Chaine, S. J., who wrote a report of his trip in the magazine *Le Rayon,* which is published in Cairo. At the time of his visit, in 1936, the monastery was inhabited by 35 monks. The monastery seemed to him a little monastic village, in which the spirit of hospitality was overwhelming.[126]

In the same year, H. Romilly Fedden travelled to the Monastery of St. Antony. His valuable observations are set down in his monograph, *A Study of the Monastery of St. Anthony,* a very helpful little booklet for the visitor or tourist.

H.V. Morton describes his visit to the Monastery of St. Antony in 1937 in his book *Through Lands of the Bible.* Most impressed by the ancient Church of St. Antony, Morton offers an interesting account of his observations. "When Father Anthony and I approached the church door, I saw a row of slippers standing outside as if it were a mosque, and therefore I removed my shoes. I found that this was expected of me whenever I entered this church. We passed into the narthex which led into one of the strangest and most primitive churches I have ever seen, even in Coptic Egypt... The whole church had once been covered with frescoes. The dome bore blackened traces of paintings all over it and the south wall still carried a series of scratched and almost invisible saints, standing stiffly under a continuous arcade. But the most interesting features of the church were the ancient painted crosses visible in those places where the plaster had fallen away.

---

(124) Piankoff, "Thomas Whittemore," 19 f.

(125) Piankoff informs me, that he wrote from 1930 to 1950 on the History and Architecture of the Monastery of St. Antonius. The unpublished *MS.* is at the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich. Unfortunately, I was not able to study the findings of Piankoff.

(126) Chaine, "Le couvent de St. Antoine," 246 f.

These are obviously old and very beautiful. Each cross is about twelve inches high, Greek in shape, and is surrounded by a conventional wreath. Above the arms of the cross are the Greek letters ICXC, and beneath the arms, NIKA, the well-known Greek monogram meaning "Jesus Christ the Conqueror." Each cross is painted a deep shade of red, on a cream ground, and the wreath is green... I was anxious to pick away a small piece of plaster to see the lower letters more clearly, but no sooner had I touched it with my nail than a monk came up and said politely that the last time someone had attempted to do such a thing a thunderbolt had killed him." [127] From the Church of St. Antony, Morton went to see the library. "After wrestling for some time with a difficult lock, Father Anthony opened the door of a room where hundreds of volumes stood entombed in wooden book-cases. What a depressingly uninviting sight a library can be when it belongs to people who rarely read a book and take no interest in them. The volumes were packed tightly together as if by the relentless hand of a charwoman, and books for which no place could be found on shelves were harshly tucked away on top and wedged in anywhere. They looked, indeed, as forbidding as a lawyer's library, and the air of the room was stuffy with paper and parchment which have been locked away for months on end." [128]

On April 10, 1956, a party of five Catholic priests, namely Fr. Giacomo Rock, Fr. Stanislav Perovic and Frs. Tarcisio de Piano, Egidio Sampiere and Gabriele Giamberardini, left Ma'adi in a southerly direction to Kuraimât, and from there to the Wâdî 'Arabah. In the monastery they were shown the churches, the garden and the spring, with Abûnâ Sîdârûs al-Antûnî as their guide. The high degree of individualism of the Coptic monks is well expressed in a dialogue which Fr. Gabriele included in his book. Talking with Abûnâ Sîdârûs, Fr. Gabriele asked him about the three monastic virtues: Poverty, obedience and chastity. "As to poverty, if anyone were to offer you L.E. 100, would you take them ?" "I would accept the whole basketful ; and as to obedience, I am independent, if I have the fancy to become a Catholic, I'll become a Catholic; and as to chastity, if I want to get married, I leave the monastery, I am independent." [129] When the

---

(127) Morton, *Through Lands of the Bible*, 340.

(128) *Ibid.*

(129) Although there is no canonical impediment to the marriage of a monk who abandons his monastic state, yet, if he does so, he will be looked at askance by friends and acquaintances who are practicing members of the Church, in other words, he will bear a stigma. If he be a hieromonk, he will, by his marriage, become unfrocked *ipso facto*.

group of priests inquired about the library, the librarian refused to show it in a very diplomatic way by pointing out that the key of the library was with the bishop in Bûsh.[130] From the late Mr. Yassâ 'Abd al-Masîh at Cairo, Fr. Gabriele heard that the monastery library consisted altogether of 2171 volumes, of which 1662 are manuscripts and 509 are printed books.

Then Abûnâ Sîdârûs took the visitor to Abûnâ Buqtur who is considered the saintliest monk of the monastery, and to Abûnâ Kîrillus, a young priest, who has published several books. Abûnâ Barsûm took them to the Cave of St. Antony where they took measurements of the tunnel and the inner cave.[131]

On August 30, 1958, the Apostolic Internuntio H.E. Mgr. Silvio Oddi visited the monastery with a group of priests.

Until the beginning of the 20th century, the only contact that the monastery had with the "world" was the monthly camel caravan that supplied the desert monks with food and necessities from the Antonian Dependency at Bûsh in the Nile valley. The journey from Kuraimât to the monastery took the Saint, his contemporary admirers and followers, as well as his successors till the beginning of the twentieth century, between three and four days.[132] From Kuraimât they travelled along the camel path passing the well of Araiyidah after 90 km. and the well of Bûiât after another 22 km. To this day, this route is followed by the Antonian supply trucks which have supplanted the more romantic camel caravans.

7. The Encroachment of the World

Since the completion of the construction of the Suez — Râs Gharîb road in 1946 by the Shell Company, the accessibility to the monastery has been greatly increased. Any motorist with an ample water and gasoline supply[133] can drive the 334 km. from Cairo to the monastery within five to six hours. The geographical isolation of the monastery has ceased to be a stumbling-block to the visitor and tourist. As Fedden asserts with so much pertinence : "It (the monastery) is set down on the fringe of the lay and the unascetic, a few gallon's worth

---

(130) Giamberardini, *St. Antonio Abate Astro del Deserto*, 31.

(131) Tunnel : length, 11 m., height, 1.50 m., width, 0.60 m. Cave : length, 7 m., height, 2.50 m., width, 2.00 m.

(132) Fedden, I believe, is correct in assuming that the last European travellers to do the trip by camel were the members of the party of Mrs. Yencken, who travelled four days to reach the monastery. A fascinating description of this route is included in Johann Georg, *op. cit.*, 32 - 43.

(133) It is well to remember that there is no gasoline station beyond 'Ain Sukhnah.

of petrol separate it from golf courses and maisons de coiffure. Each year the silence around the monastery is more broken, and inevitably each succeeding traveller is of less importance."[134] The Egyptian magazine *Images* impresses its urban readers with the possibility of spending a perfect week-end where, at one time, the hermit sought to be left undisturbed. "Une excursion pour votre Week-End : Les Monastères de la Mer Rouge!"[135] The Automobile Club d'Egypte has published an *Itinéraire de l'excursion du Caire au Monastère de Saint Antoine* prepared by Major-General Rifa'at al-Gawharî. This guide makes it quite impossible to fail to reach one's destination. The days of the early travellers who ventured by faith and enthusiasm have passed. The "world" is in the process of penetrating into the remotest corners of the world. In 1953, the Shell Company macadamized the road from the lighthouse of Za'frânah to the monastery, and every vehicle with two, three or four wheels can now easily reach the Antonian monastery. The camel caravan has been replaced by jeeps and trucks, and the day will not be far distant, when helicopters or mechanized birds of the sky will disturb the peace and the quietness of the air which surrounds the place. On January 6, 1955, Captain W.F. Judd of TWA[136] introduced this possibility by landing with a Cessna 170 at St. Antony's. The monks say that before Captain Judd left, he asked Abûnâ Buqtur to join him on his return flight to Cairo. Abûnâ Buqtur consented and the hermit was seen climbing into the machine.

According to the most recent visitor's book at the guesthouse of the monastery, 367 foreigners have visited the monastery between 1953 and 1958. Of these visitors, 197 were British, many of whom were stationed with the British Army in the Red Sea area in the vicinity of the monastery. Sixty Germans, 39 French, 29 Swiss, 17 Americans, 8 Spaniards, 5 Yugoslavs, 5 Belgians, 3 Dutch, 2 Austrians, 2 Italians, in addition to many Egyptians, have entered their names in the book. This increase is quite remarkable when one compares these figures to those of visitors twenty or even eighty years ago. Greville Chester visited the monastery in 1870 and stated that it had not been visited by more than one or two Europeans in his generation, and Schweinfurth remarked that only very seldom did Europeans visit the monastery.[137]

Fedden in 1946 estimated that the monks have "something like fifty visitors a year."[138]

---

(134) Fedden, *op. cit.*, 49.

(135) Doresse, *Images*, June 3, 1950.

(136) See visitors' book at the Monastery of St. Antony.

(137) Schweinfurth, *op. cit.*, 173.

(138) Fedden, *op. cit.*, 51.

One reaches the monastery from Cairo via Suez along the Red Sea road to the lighthouse of Za'frânah (289 km.). In order to travel along the Red Sea road, however, every person should be in possession of a Red Sea Desert Permit issued by the Egyptian Frontiers Police.[139] This pass has to be produced twice on the way, at Suez, and at 'Ain Sukhnah some 45 km. south of Suez.[140] On reaching Za'frânah it may be advisable to inform the Frontier Corps of one's trip to the monastery. Since the monastery is without direct mail service, it is always greatly appreciated by the monks if visitors act as messengers or mail carriers between the monastery and the "world", in this case the lighthouse of Za'frânah with its Army and Frontier Corps barracks. From Za'frânah, one travels in a westerly direction along the new road mentioned above. The road leads through the Wâdî 'Arabah, one of the least arid valleys in the Eastern desert, which is located between the North and South Qalâlah mountain ranges. After 30 km., a sign with the name of the monastery in English and in Arabic points to the direction of the monastery. Another 15 km. of desert road in a southwesterly direction, and the monastery with the top of its palm-trees and bell-towers showing above its walls comes into sight.

In order to avoid unnecessary delay and to ensure a gracious welcome it is advisable to obtain a letter of introduction from the Coptic Patriarchate in Cairo. This is not to say that without a letter the visitor will not be permitted to enter. Many thefts and robberies, however, have caused the monks to be extremely cautious. The following little story told by Jules Leroy[141] illustrates this point. Once the passengers of two American cars lost their way in the desert and arrived at the monastery at 11 p.m. After "une heure de palabres" the monks finally opened the gate. The whole monastery was on the alert. The peaceful strangers were welcomed and invited to remain the night in the monastery guesthouse. Next day they were told how much they scared the monks, arriving at such hour and without a letter from the Patriarchate.

8. Modern Asceticism at St. Antony's

In 1960, the monastery had about 80 monks, 24 of whom remain at Mount Clysma. Eleven monks are at the Dependency at Bûsh, while about 20 serve as parish priests in Egypt and another 20 are attached to the See of Jerusalem. It is a tradition that the Coptic custodianship of the Holy Places in Palestine should be in the hands of the Antonian monks.[142] At present, there are also four monks serving in Israel, two of them in Jaffa and two at Nazareth. Like all inhabited monasteries of the middle of the twentieth century, Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs shows a very healthy age distribution of its inhabitants. Of the 24 monks staying at Mount Clysma the following list shows their age distribution:

---

[139] It is advisable to apply three days prior to the intended trip to the Automobile Club, 5, Kasr al-Nil, Cairo, or the Frontiers Police.

[140] 'Ain Sukhnah has become a favourite bathing resort, mainly because of the sweet-water spring close to the beach.

[141] Leroy, *Moines et Monastères du Proche-Orient,* 46.

Between 20 and 30 years of age, 6 monks
Between 30 and 40 years of age, 4 monks
Between 40 and 50 years of age, 5 monks
Between 50 and 60 years of age, 5 monks
Between 60 and 70 years of age, 2 monks
and over 70 years of age, 2 monks.

A few years ago, even more young monks used to stay at the monastery. Some of them have been assigned for parish work, while others have undertaken to serve in Jerusalem. The youngest monk at present is Abûnâ Sulaimân al-Antûnî, who is just 21 years of age, He must have joined the monastery very recently, for when Mrs. Winifred Holmes visited the monastery in 1955 and 1956 to make recordings for the B.B.C.'s Third Program in the monastery, the youngest monk was Abûnâ Buqtur al-Antûnî. He had entered the monastic life at the exceptionally young age of 17, and had been ordained priest two years later in 1953.[143] The following excerpt of a letter by Mrs. Holmes is reproduced here to show that the ascetic pioneering spirit of the great Desert Hermit still survives in the twentieth century.[144]

"When I visited St. Anthony's Monastery at Easter 1955, from my first visit, I found the youngest monk, Abûnâ Boctor, who comes from Upper Egypt, was modelling his life on that of his "master", St. Anthony. He was in his early twenties and had a thin, sensitive face with the eyes of a dreamer. Although he lived within the community of monks and was already in priest's orders, he had sccoped himself out a hole in the sandy — rocky — bank outside the monastery gardens and near the wall that shuts out the mountain of Mt. Colzoum behind. He was within the walls, not outside them, but he made his cell in

---

(142) *Cf.* Meinardus, *The Copts in Jerusalem.*

(143) Monks are sometimes ordained to the priesthood earlier than the canonical age. This, however, is being discontinued, as young monks are liable to be called up for military service.

(144) A personal letter of Mrs. Winifred Holmes to the author, Aug. 29, 1958.

Abûnâ Shârûbîm al-Antûnî.

Abûna Buqtur al-Antûnî.

what he could find of desert within them. He was not at the time actually living in this hole, but had been doing so until the then abbot, old Abûnâ Seraphim, had persuaded him to live in one of the little monk's houses in the street of the monastery, I believe for health reasons. But he spent as long as he could in meditation and prayer in his sandy domain alone and had also cultivated in front of it a small garden, as St. Anthony must have done there originally, by digging an irrigation trench to bring water from the famous spring to his patch of sand. In there he was growing prickly pear, some onions and cucumbers, all rather sickly, but above all, a rose. It was all rather heroic and almost pathetic, but to him a miracle. And indeed it was a miracle as he was able to bring the petals from his own little struggling rose tree to cover the icon of the crucified Christ on Good Friday. He seemed to have the exalted look of the true mystic and was at the same time ingenuous and very friendly, with a child-like joy in meeting sympathetic people, but obviously quite independent of them and solitary in the true sense of the word.

"Easter 1956. Then I found Abûnâ Boctor had been granted his wish. He was living entirely in his hole in the sand, but he made it with his own hands into a tiny cell, which he had painted with a cross outside. Inside, it had a simple bunk and shelf for his little shrine. Outside he had made from mud-bricks a long low seat where he would sit and read with one of the novices — there were two young ones now — and help them. And his garden now really blossomed and thrived — he said with God's blessings. He had also made his simple tomb of mud-brick beside his garden, and contemplated living there in semi-retreat until the end of his days, following his master. His face was even more ascetic and his eyes shone. He was one of the officiating priests during the Easter services and his prostrations were the humblest and most complete. Once he supplied the roses for the burial of Christ. When I mentioned his name to the bishop he spoke of him as 'the young hermit'."

Abûnâ Buqtur al-Antûnî as no other monk of St. Antony's has already in his young age attracted the attention of visitors and ecclesiastical dignitaries. Jules Leroy[145] met him and, deeply impressed by his sincere spirituality, devoted several pages and pictures to this solitary monk. "The first time I saw him was in the evening. Seated on his heals, facing the sun-set, he had placed in front of him some plates with dried seeds, and every now and then he would swallow

---

(145) Leroy, *op. cit.*, 50 — 51, and illustrations, 54, 63.

slowly, without paying the slightest attention to the people around him. This scene took place in an atmosphere of complete silence, in a far away corner of the monastery, next to his cell, which he had built all alone. The cell, just a square room, is covered with a mat on which the monk usually rests. On the walls are a number of Gospel quotations in Arabic as well as pictures of Christ and Saints. Abûnâ Buqtur is also seen pacing the narrow lanes of the monastery, where he calls on other monks to comfort them. Sometimes you see him seated on a small stool near the door of his cell, reading the Gospels or singing in a monotonous voice accompanied by cymbals. This small peaceful world is sufficient for this simple soul, who for seven years has not left the monastery, and who has never seen his relatives again. Even when the latter, after having travelled the long way through the desert, wanted to visit him, they were merely informed, that he was absent." [146]

I have met Abûnâ Buqtur several times, and I can only substantiate what has been said about him. His almost angelic appearance left an unforgettable impression upon me when I met him one night at the spring of St. Antony, apparently one of his favourite places in the monastery.

Apart from Abûnâ Buqtur, Abûnâ Yustus al-Antûnî has long been considered a saint by his fellow-monks. Abûnâ Yustus lives all by himself in a small cell in the western part of the monastery, the cell which according to the monks was inhabited by Anbâ Butrus VII more than 150 years ago. Of the monks in the Eastern Desert, Abûnâ Yustus might come closest to the ideal hermit type. Having lived for 22 years in the monastery, he left the monastery only once for a year during which he stayed at the Dair al-Muharraq. Himself an extremely humble person, he does not relate any of his numerous religious experiences and visions to anyone. His fellow-monks, however, can relate many strange stories regarding their saint. The Church of St.

---

(146) The relation a monk has to his family depends entirely upon the degree of his isolation from the world. Anbâ Poemen, an ascete in the Desert of Scetis, later at Tarnût, is reported to have driven away his mother who had come to see her son. Palladius mentions a certain monk, who used to live in a cave in the desert. "A message was sent unto him by his kinsfolk, saying, 'Thy father is grievously sick, and is nigh to die, therefore come, and inherit his possessions'; and he made answer unto them, saying, 'I died to the world long before he will die, and a dead man cannot be the heir of a living one'." Palladius, *op. cit.*, II, 36, On the other hand, some monks receive members of their families when they visit the monasteries, others even leave the monastery temporarily to visit with their family.

Mark is regularly visited by Abûnâ Yustus who for years has taken care of the candles at the feretory of the saint. Every night he lights a candle and Abûnâ Sâwîrûs assured me of the frequent visions that Abûnâ Yustus had of St. Mark. The sounds which are heard at night coming from the cell of Abûnâ Yustus, the monks attribute to the voice of God, the Blessed Virgin or the Angels who communicate with the saint. I have seen Abûnâ Yustus once wandering outside the monastery walls, though I was not given any explanation. The cell of this hermit is more primitive and simple than anything I have ever seen. Sleeping on the floor, he has his fruits and vegetables placed around him. His meat and much of his bread he gives to the cats and dogs, thus he appears like a skeleton clothed in his old black robes.

One of the interesting characteristics of mid-twentieth century Coptic monasticism is the many important roles and functions carried out by relatively young monks. The ex-hegoumenos of Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs, Abûnâ Mitîâs al-Antûnî, belongs to this young group of monks. He had served from 1951 to 1953 with the Antonian monks at Jerusalem, before he was called to take charge of the internal affairs of the monastery.[147] The final authority of the monastery, however, rests with the bishop who resides at the Dependency of St. Antony's at Bûsh. The episcopal throne of St. Antony's is vacant for the time being.

Many of the ancient customs and practices, be they religious, social or economic have changed, and there are definite signs which lead one to suppose that the process of inner-monastic evolution has not been completed. The most outstanding characteristic at St. Antony's, as in other Coptic monasteries, is the high degree of individualization of the monks, an individualism that permeates the whole social fabric of the community, including the religious exercises.

The monks of St. Antony — though not all of them — do hold some property which they acquire through their monthly allowance, which is L.E. 3.000 plus an annual sum of L.E. 12.000 for clothing.[148] With this money, the monks purchase livestock, such as rabbits, goats, ducks, chickens, etc. These delicacies are frequently offered to visitors or special guests. The guest-book shows several references to the good meals offered and served by the monks. The servants of the monastery are fellahîn, peasants from the Nile valley, who are engaged in the

---

(147) In 1960, the hegoumenos was the oldest monk of the monastery, Abûnâ Surîâl. He was followed by Abûnâ Banîâmîn.

(148) The monks of Dair Anbâ Bûlâ and Dair as-Surîan get only L.E. 1.500 and an annual clothing allowance of L.E. 6.000. The allowance of the monks at Dair al-Muharraq is the same as that of the monks at Dair Antûnîûs.

menial tasks to be carried out around the monastery. Their monthly wage of L.E. 3.000 plus board and lodging still compares favourably to some salaries paid in the Nile valley. Because of family obligations, the fellahîn servants do not stay longer than six months in the desert monastery. At present, there are four servants attached to the monastery.

The monastic life at Mount Clysma consists of Community worship, that is the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, the Canonical Hours, private devotions in the cells which take the form of meditation and contemplation, manual work in the garden, kitchen, bake-house, or library.

9. The Monastery in the Middle of the 20th Century

During the winter season from November to April, the Divine Liturgy is celebrated three times a week on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays, beginning at 4 a.m. in the Church of St. Antony.

This church and the old south wall belong to the few remains which date prior to the rebuilding of the present monastery in the 16th century. There is no doubt that the present church existed in the 15th century as the smoke stains caused by the occupation of the Bedouins indicate. Though Johann Georg feels justified in placing the edifice in the seventh or the eighth century,[149] a later date might be more conformable to the wall paintings and the general structure of the building. Furthermore, the Gothic graffiti on the walls of the church testify to the 13th-15th century. As Piankoff points out, the paintings of the warrior-saints fall into the period of the restoration of the church by the sons of Ghâlib in 1232-1233.[150] The walls seem to show two layers of paint, indicating that the paintings were possibly restored by an Italian artist in the 16th century. The paintings were cleaned from dust by Prof. Whittemore, who visited the monastery in 1930.

Following the arrangement of Piankoff, we may divide the church into five parts in order to list the wall-paintings.[151]

The haikal: Christ as the Pantocrator, the Angels, the Enthroned Christ, the Sacrifice of Abraham, Abraham and Melchisedek, Jeremiah, Elijah, Isaiah, Moses, David, Daniel, St. Mark, St. Athanasius, St. Severus of Antioch, St. Dioscorus, St. Peter of Alexandria, St. Theophilus.

The passage in front of the haikal : The myrrh-bearing women,

---

(149) Johann Georg, *op. cit.*, 37.

(150) Piankoff, "Peintures au Monastère de Saint Antoine", 163.

(151) Piankoff, *op. cit.*, 157-159.

namely : Mary Magdalene, Mary, mother of James, and Salome, Christ and two women saints, St. Mercurius, Jacob, Isaac, Abraham, three unidentified saints, Nebuchadnezzar, St. George, St. Michael and St. Gabriel.

The nave : The monks : St. Isaac, St. Paul the Simple, St. Samuel, St. Psoi, four unidentified monks, a bishop, Anbâ Moses, two monks blessed by Christ, a monk with an angel, four unidentified monks and one unidentified female saint, two unidentified monks.

The narthex : St. Arsophonius, St. Thuan, two monks blessed by Christ, a warrior-saint, St. Claudius, St. Victor, St. Menas, St. Theodore, three warrior-saints and (?) St. George.

The small chapel located at the south-west corner of the church : Two angels, Christ between the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. John the Baptist and the Cross adored by the Angels. For some reason, the wall-paintings in the chapel are quite well preserved.

The wall-paintings of a certain warrior-saint, in all probability St. George, on the north wall of the narthex has attracted the attention of numerous visitors. In the lower right corner of the painting is a church, and the monks following the identification of Jullien, consider this building to be Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.[152] Though the dome and the two semi-domes resemble it, the basilical hall excludes Hagia Sophia. Schweinfurth saw in the warrior-saint even the Emperor Constantine with the royal palace of Constantinople.[153] But regarding this, Piankoff, the iconographical expert, says : "Who is this mysterious horseman spearing a dragon while in the background (?) appears a large Byzantine Church which has been identified with Santa Sophia ? There is only one military saint spearing a dragon and that is, moreover, St. Theodore the General (Stratelates). Now it is precisely he who has not a church beneath the horse's feet. The church on the left, fairly distant, belongs to the representation of St. Menas, and it is the Martyrium at Mareotis."[154]

The church has three haikals, though only one is in use. Icons of Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Resurrection, St. George, St. Michael and St. Mercurius are attached to the choir screen, icons of St. George, St. Michael, St. Paul the Theban and St. Antony, St. Gabriel, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and St. Mercurius decorate the nave screen.

During the summer months from April to October, the Divine

---

(152) Jullien, *op. cit.*, 42.

(153) Schweinfurth, *op. cit.*, 179 - 180.

(154) Piankoff, "Deux peintures de Saints Militaires au Monastère de Saint Antoine", 17 - 25.

Liturgy is celebrated in the Church of the Apostles or the Church of SS. Peter and Paul. This church is just to the east of the Church of St. Antony. It is much more recent than the former one, and the date of 1772 seems quite acceptable.[155] Johann Georg's assumption that the church belongs to the 17th century is hardly tenable, though Wansleben speaks of an older church on this site, when he visited the monastery in 1672. The Church of the Apostles, or the "Summer Church" as the monks refer to it, contains three haikals. The northern haikal is dedicated to St. George, the central haikal to the Twelve Apostles and the south haikal to Sitt Dimîânah.[156] The icons and pictures attached to the northern haikal screen represent the Falling-Asleep of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Life of Christ in fifteen miniature paintings, St. Michael, St. Gabriel, the Apostles SS. Peter and Paul. The icons and pictures fastened to the choir screen are those of St. George, the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Victor, the Nativity, Anbâ Kîrillus IV, St. Athanasius, St. Paul the Theban and St. Antony, St. Thecla, the Baptism of Christ, St. George, St. Mercurius, the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem and St. Stephen. The icons and paintings on the nave screen represent Abraham sacrificing Isaac, the Crucifixion, St. Barsûm, St. George and Anbâ Shenûdah. Furthermore, there is one painting that has attracted the attention of many visitors, it shows St. Antony with his pig. To picture the Desert Saint with a pig, as iconography has done, may appear strange, especially if one considers how the Oriental regarded and still regards the pig as an unclean animal.[157] A legend is told in France that explains at least for some people, the peculiar relationship of the hermit to this animal. According to this story, St. Antony visited France. The king, hearing about the many miracles of the saint, asked him to come to his court. His son had been born with a pig's head, and thus was unqualified to be the heir to the throne. St. Antony, after his audience with the king, saw a sucking pig born blind in the court yard, and he was moved with compassion. He restored the sight of the young pig and, in gratitude for this kindly deed, the mother sow promised him all he wanted. The story continues that St. Antony only had to touch the prince, and the pig's head turned into a human head.

For fifteen days during Lent, the monks celebrate the Divine Liturgy in the Church of St. Mark, who in the opinion of the monks

---

(155) Fedden, *op. cit.*, 55.

(156) For the relationship of Sitt Dimîânah with the Monastery of St. Antony, *cf.* ch. Dair Sitt Dimîânah.

(157) *Cf. Luke* 15 : 11 ff.

was a disciple of St. Antony. [158] The twelve domed church, dating from 1766, has three haikals.[159] The southern haikal is dedicated to St. Mercurius or Abû Saifain,[160] the central haikal to St. Mark and the northern haikal to St. Theodore the Martyr. The icons in the church portray St. George, the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Mark the Evangelist, St. Paul the Theban and St. Antony. For many centuries the church has attracted the piety of the Bedouins and the peasant pilgrims, [161] because of the miracles associated with the relics of St. Mark which are kept in the wooden feretory on the north wall of the church. Abûnâ Salîb al-Antûnî tells of the wonderful things that have happened in connection with the relics of St. Mark. The oil of the tiny lamp hanging over the feretory has a therapeutic effect, when applied in cases of rheumatism, rheumatic fevers and the like.[162] A story, which I have heard on several occasions, tells about the miraculous lighting of this lamp. Several monks have experienced that, when they were about to light the lamp, the lamp was already lit.

It appears from what I have seen and heard that the monks pay a great deal of tribute to the patron saint of this church. Abûnâ Mitîâs al-Antûnî related how the veneration of St. Mark originated. "Many centuries ago King Barqûq of Egypt [163] fought a savage battle in which he was almost defeated. At the most critical hour of the fight, the king turned to St. Antony in prayer. It was at this time that the monks of the monastery saw one of their number arrayed as a warrior. Naturally, the monks laughed and ridiculed him and thought him to be a fool. After King Barqûq had won his victory, he set out to visit the Monastery of St. Antony, as he desired to express his gratitude to the monks. He met them all, except one, Anbâ Murqus. Then the

---

(158) There is some confusion about the identity of this saint. Fedden following Malan. *Original Documents of the Coptic Church,* says that "this is apparently not the Mark celebrated in the *Synaxarium*, the friend of Anthony." Wansleben says that the third church in the garden is dedicated "à un Religieux Laic de ce Couvent, nommé Marc, qui y mourut en odeur de saintété, et dont on conserve le corps dans cette Eglise." Wansleben, *op. cit.*, 304.

(159) The church of St. Mark was built or probably rebuilt, by Hassan Allah al-Bayardî.

(160) i.e. Father of Two Swords.

(161) It is interesting to note that many of the peasants and all of the Bedouins are Muslims.

(162) According to Burmester, the oil from the lamp hanging before the shrine of St. George, in the Greek Orthodox Monastery, at Old Cairo, has also therapeutic qualities for various complaints.

(163) The utter confusion caused by these miraculous stories and legends becomes explicit by this illustration. King Barqûq was one of the powerful Mameluke rulers of the 14th century who was known as Sultan Malik al-Zâhir.

king knew that it was Anbâ Murqus who had helped him to win the battle. From that day on, the monks commenced to venerate the warrior-saint, and after his death, he was buried in a special place." The Church of St. Mark is the only sanctuary in the monastery that contains any relics of a saint. On the wooden feretory of St. Mark we find a graffito with the following text: "Ubi celebratur quadrigenta diebus & ultra" (Here the mass was celebrated forty and more?). The intimate connection that this church has had with members of the Latin Church is also evident from the Latin Terra Santa Cross that is found above the entrance to the church.

The Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary is used only during the fifteen days period of fasting before the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Lady on the 16th of Masrî. The church which is located in the same building as the refectory has only one haikal, ornamented with pictures of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, the Crucifixion, St. Stephen, the Nativity, the Holy Family, St. Paul the Theban and St. Antony, St. Stephen, another icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary and a picture of St. Juliana, Sitt Dimîânah and St. Barbara. It should be added that, to-day, there is only one church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, though there is a tradition which states that the old church of St. Antony used to be named after her.

The Chapel of St. Michael is located, as in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn monasteries, on the top floor of the keep. The haikal screen bears a date of the 17th century, though the church may be much older. The church cannot be visited because of its dilapidated condition. Fedden comments that it is not in use and that the architecture is of no interest.[164]

In addition to these five churches, there are two churches that are named after St. Paul the Theban. Both of these churches are not in use. The "old" church of Anbâ Bûlâ was built by Anbâ Kîrillus IV.[165] The church has three haikals, though they are completely empty. The church is partly used as a storehouse for certain agricultural products. The "new" church of Anbâ Bûlâ was built by Anbâ Tawfîlûs around 1930, but the building has not been completed. The church is located in the immediate vicinity of the two bell-towers that can be seen from a great distance.

Abûnâ Shârûbîm al-Antûnî is the librarian of the three libraries

---

(164) Fedden, *op. cit.*, 56.

(165) According to Schweinfurth in 1859.

located in the "gaww" building,[166] which also houses the refectory and the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We have noted elsewhere[167] that the monastery's literary treasures were used by the Bedouins to light their fires in the Church of St. Antony. It is impossible, of course, to estimate the loss of ancient valuable texts. At present, the library material of the monastery is divided between three separate libraries. The old library contains 1007 manuscripts,[168] the new library has 347 printed works,[169] and the third library 719 manuscripts and 361 printed books.[170] We are told that after the sack of the monastery in the 15th century, Anbâ Ghabrîâl VII restored remnants of the library in the qasr. In the latter part of the 19th century the books must have been transferred to their present location.

A rather amusing story is recorded by R.R. Madden, who in 1826 met a Coptic monk of the Monastery of St. Antony in Jerusalem. In their conversation, the monk referred to his monastery of origin, where "all the knowledge which exists in the world of magic is shut up. There is a large library of ancient MSS. Coptic and Chaldean books, and as no stranger is admitted within the walls of the monastery, the secrets of the dark science are buried there." The monk had left the Monastery of St. Antony in 1801, and the little he knew of magic, he acquired there, but he said "I cannot boast one fiftieth part of the supernatural power of the other priests."[171]

The refectory dates from the rebuilding of the monastery in 1560-70, but there is no sign that it has been used for a long time.[172] The Antonian monks eat in their cells, and the practice described by Fedden, that "the refectory is only used on Sundays or, as at present at St. Antony's on Saturdays and Sundays", has been abandoned. Similar to the refectories in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn the room is a long vaulted chamber down the centre of which there runs a rough broad masonry table. The quality and the quantity of the food taken by the monks depends entirely upon the individual monk. After Paschaltide some monks go every year to al-Marsâ south of Ras Za'frânah at the Red Sea for fishing, from where they send their catch to the monastery

---

(166) Schweinfurth, *op. cit.*, 173. "Eine Klosterbibliothek besteht nicht!"

(167) *Cf.* pp. 44-45.

(168) The 1007 books of the first library can be divided into 312 Biblica, 322 Theologica, 213 Historica, 160 Liturgica.

(169) The 347 books of the second library can be divided into 76 Historica, 152 Liturgica and 119 Varia.

(170) The 1080 books of the third library can be divided into 764 Liturgica and 316 Varia.

(171) Madden, *Travels in Turkey, Egypt, Nubia and Palestine*, II, 286.

(172) Wansleben, *op. cit.*, 302.

every second or third day. The fishing nets are kept in the storehouse of the monastery.

Apart from his duties, Abûnâ Shârûbîm al-Antûnî is in charge of the government weather-station which is situated within the monastery walls, in the garden north-east of the guest-house. In addition to three temperature readings, the daily minimum and maximum temperatures are recorded. A barometer for measuring atmospheric pressure and a raingauge for measuring the monthly rainfall, supply important meteorological information which is sent monthly via the Dependency at Bûsh to the weather bureau in Cairo.

Another recent innovation is the new (1951) electric generator which supplies the monastery with sufficient electric power. The generator is located in the vicinity of the old mill, south of the guest house.

The spring of St. Antony supplies the monastic community with sufficient water for use.[173] Situated in the southern part of the monastery, it furnishes about 100 m^3 daily. The temperature of the water is constant at about 23° centigrade and, in spite of a small percentage of phosphorus, it is a sweet and excellent drinking water.[174] As Fedden points out, and as I can also substantiate, the character of the water apparently has changed. Wansleben speaks of its salty character

---

(173) A study of a sample of water from the spring of St. Antony has revealed that the chloride concentration is 386 ppm., and the total electrolites (Na Cl) 1158 ppm. The total electrolites of the spring of St. Paul's Monastery are 1228 ppm. The chloride concentration of the water from the Monastery of the Syrians shows 243 ppm. and that of Dair Anbâ Bishoî 121 ppm. while the total electrolites of the Syrian Monastery's water are 848 ppm., and that of Anbâ Bishoî 462 ppm. There has been much study but little agreement on the tolerance of man to salt and other minerals in the drinking water. Different animals show wide difference in their ability to live on brakish water. The well of al-Ghadir and Bîr Ranga have chloride concentrations of 1079 ppm. and 4360 ppm. and are used for camels. It has been demonstrated that the gerboa can live on sea-water. The maximum chloride concentration in potable water considered safe by the United States Government is 250 ppm. (U.S. Treasury Dept. Bull., Feb. 6, 1946). The Ministry of Health of Egypt pronounced the water of the well Umm Khargia unfit for drinking in 1953. Its chloride concentration is 600 ppm. F.W. Shotton *(Water and Water Engineering,* 49, May 1946) stated that during World War II, water of 2000 ppm. salinity was imbibed without bad effects. E.F. Adolph *et al. (Physiology of Man in the Desert)* estimated that the upper limit of salinity which human beings can tolerate is half that of sea water. This means a chloride concentration of 9445 ppm. The chloride concentration in the water of St. Antony's Monastery is high when compared to the U. S. standard, but it is low when compared to the wells of Abû Ghusum and Bîr Asalî (706 ppm. and 3299 ppm.) which are used by Bedouins of the Abada tribe.

(174) Fedden, *op. cit.*, 59.

and of the bad effect it had upon those who were not accustomed to it.[175]

There are several springs in the vicinity of the monastery, and Fedden lists the names of eight, though I could identify and locate only four of them.[176] It is interesting to note that the monastery claims the immediate surroundings outside the walls. Thus the date palms outside the monastery proper are guarded by a Bedouin who is hired by the monastery. The monks insist that what is within and immediately without the monastery is in their territory, and that there the snakes do not bite, due to the "Secret of the Snakes" which is kept somewhere inside the monastery. Yet, there is good evidence that the snakes in the Wâdî 'Arabah do bite.[177]

It is a different story, however, with the scorpions. Some forty years ago, the "Secret of the Scorpions" which protected the monks of St. Antony's from scorpion stings was disturbed by Abûnâ Hannâ Subhî al-Antûnî, who was fond of digging for antiquities in the qasr.[178] After the disturbance or destruction of the charm, the scorpions at St. Antony's began to sting, though the stings were not fatal. The scorpions at Dair Anbâ Bûlâ apparently do not sting, for their "Secret" has been left undisturbed.[179] It is most likely that these charms have had a very ancient origin.

Thus Wansleben records that on Mount Clysma there grows a kind of wood which the monks call "the Wood of the Scorpion" and which, on being reduced to powder is used by them as a very powerful antidote against the poisonous stings of scorpions as well as a medicine for the inflammation of the eyes.[180] Though the present qasr dates from the rebuilding of the monastery in 1560, the base of the building may well have been constructed in the tenth century. The qasr of the

---

(175) Wansleben, *op. cit.*, 303.

(176) In the North Qalâlah : Za'frânah, Baghkît, Buraidab, Barda, Areda. In the South Qalâlah : Buwairat, 'Ūmm Uwainibah, As-Samar. I could identify and place the locality of only four of them. Bir Za'frânah, 27 km. north-east of the monastery ; Bir Bikheit, 36 km. north of the monastery, Bîr Aridah, 40 km. west-north-west of the monastery and Bîr Buwairat 18 km. west-north-west of the monastery.

(177) For an excellent study of snakes in Egypt, *cf.* Keimer, "Histoires de Serpents dans l'Egypte ancienne et moderne," in *Mémoires présentés à l'Institut d'Egypte*, 1947.

(178) Wansleben and Pococke report that the treasures of the monastery were stored in the qasr, and Chester in 1873 was shown some books, an old Abyssinian shield of hippopotamus hide, a cross, a very old bronze lamp, and a silvermounted umbrella.

(179) The "Secret of the Snakes" and the "Secret of the Scorpions" are presumably charms hidden in some unknown places in the monastery.

(180) Wansleben, *op. cit.*, 323.

desert monasteries has a dual purpose, for it serves as a storehouse and also, as it was originally intended, as a place of refuge in periods of danger and attack.

The monastery walls enclose an area of 18 feddans, of which 10 feddans belong to the garden. The walls, like those of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn monasteries, are ten to twelve metres high, and surmounted by a *chemin de ronde* (sentinel walk) with a width of 1-2 m. The state of the walls shows several repairs and additions, which means that the monks distinguish between the old and the new walls. The former may go back as far as the tenth century while the new walls were built by Anbâ Kîrillus IV, in 1854. The walls, on which one can walk around the whole monastery, though with some difficulties, here and there, are about two kilometres in length, and it takes almost one hour to complete the tour. From the walls one looks down into the monastery which appears like a typical Egyptian village with its mud brick houses, its narrow streets, its numerous churches, gardens, palm-trees and water channels.

10. The Caves of the Thebaid

The Eastern desert and the Red Sea mountains have long been a retreat for ascetics of various kinds. Palladius reports about the blessed man Possidonius the Theban who lived "by the side of Porphyrites." This must have been towards the end of the fourth century, for we hear that the same Possidonius was living with Palladius in Bethlehem where they had met St. Jerome (340-420 A.D.), "who was exceedingly well versed in the art and practices of grammar, and he was greatly skilled in the Latin language, but he possessed the vices of envy and evil-eyedness." [181]

For that matter, there are several references to Christian anchorites who lived in the Porphyry mountains. Tregenza, who travelled through this area in 1949, and who studied the Red Sea mountain districts (though mainly south of the Wâdî 'Arabah) mentions several places where anchorites used to live. He makes a reference to the "Um Sidri Monastery" [182] and to the site of a former Christian church in the West Qattâr mountains. It is interesting to note that the earliest anchorites in the Eastern desert must have begun their ascetic life about the same time as in the deserts of Nitria and Scetis, if not even earlier. A Greek inscription "on a roughly-squared block of granite" is preserved and bears the following text. "Flavius Julius, the eminent

---

(181) Palladius, *The Paradise or Garden of the Holy Fathers*, I, 173-174.

(182) Tregenza, *The Red Sea Mountains of Egypt*, 115.

leader of the Thebaid, built here a Catholic church, at the time when Hatres was the Bishop of Maximianopolis."[183] We know that by 341 A.D. Flavius Julius, the father of the Eastern desert, had been transferred from the Thebaid to take charge of the newly established province of Augustamnica.[184]

When enquiring about anchorite life in the Thebaid I heard that the fishermen of al-Ghardaqah speak about a natural cave on the Gafatin or Gaftun island. Apparently, a colony of monks used to live, not so long ago, on the Red Sea islands east of al-Ghardaqah. The "chief monk" used to live on Al-Gaftun which has the nicest cave. The fishermen say that this cave shows that some work was done in it, for there are small shelves for candles in it. The other monks stayed on Abû Munvar island, west of al-Gaftun, where there are many trees.

The Wâdî 'Arabah, in which the Monastery of St. Antony is located, is full of archaeological sites. Numerous caves which have been recently discovered bear witness to the fact that the cave life of the ancient desert fathers was practised, not only in the Desert of Scetis, but also in the Eastern Desert, the Thebaid. Cells in the vicinity of the Wâdî Natfîh,[185] the Bîr Bakhît,[186] and the Wâdî Ghanâbah[187] bear witness to the fact that the anchorite life was apparently just as popular there as in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. We know from the *Vita Antonii* that the Great Hermit, when he withdrew from his original cell at Pispir, did not stay in the desert. He went up to the Mountain of Clysma where he discovered a natural cave which, at the same time, was invisible from the Wâdî. It was in this cave that he could and did escape from the many visitors who had followed him into the desert. For those who visited him, gardens with fruits and vegetables were planted at the foot of the mountain, and we know that his disciples took care of him by supplying him with food. Of the several possible and available localities in the Wâdî 'Arabah, St. Antony chose the most remote place. For anyone climbing the mountain, it is quite essential to employ the services of a monk. A good number of the monks of the monastery have climbed the mountain and visited the cave.

As one ascends the Mountain of Clysma to which St. Antony withdrew, one passes, after a steep and steady climb of half an hour, the cave of St. Paul the Simple. It is good to rest here for a while, and to

---

(183) *Ibid.*, 178. Mr. James Drescher has almost certainly identified Maximianopolis with Qena. *Cf.* Murray, "The Christian Settlement at Qattâr", 108.

(184) *Ibid.*

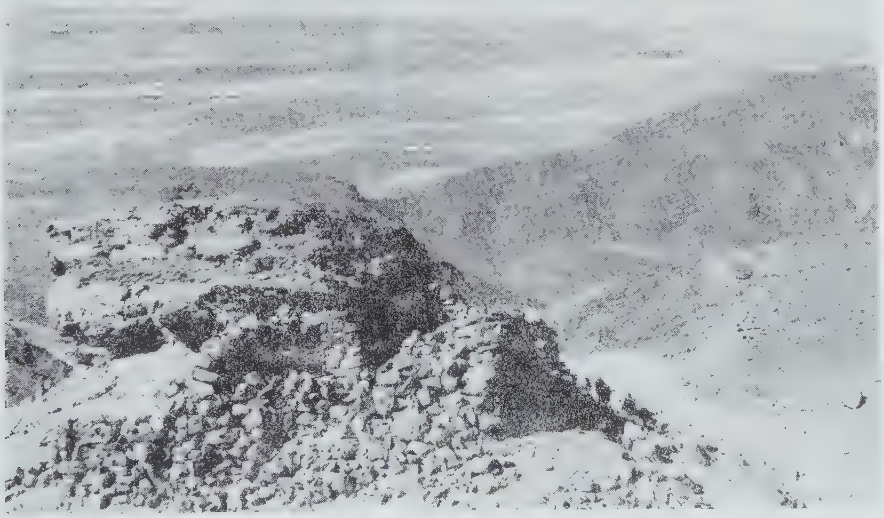
(185) Fontaine, "Le Monachisme Copte et la Montagne de Saint Antoine," 20.

(186) *Ibid.*, 21.

(187) *Ibid.*, 18.

gather strength for the last few hundred feet which prove to be quite difficult.

St. Paul the Simple, who lived in close proximity to his celebrated master, was one of his most faithful disciples. We are told by Palladius that he was married to a beautiful but wicked woman who had left him and had been committing adultery for a long time.[188] Having surprised her in the act of adultery, Paul praised God and said: "It is good, truly she is not accounted mine by me. By Jesus, henceforth I will not take her again... I will become a monk."[189] Then St. Paul went immediately to St. Antony to be accepted by him as a monk. But his old age, he was eighty years old, was against him. St. Antony compelled him several times to leave his cave and to return to his village. But St. Paul persisted, and after four days of fasting, St. Antony said to him: "Behold, thou hast become a monk, and henceforth thou must live by thyself so that thou mayest receive the temptations of the devils."[190] It was his experience of solitary life that



View from the back of the Cave of St. Paul the Simple.

---

[188] Palladius, *op. cit.*, I, 125.

[189] *Ibid.*

[190] *Ibid.*, 125-128, 278-281, Neale, *A History of the Holy Eastern Church*, I, 177.

gave St. Paul the Simple the gift of healing and of casting out devils, a power in which he even surpassed his teacher.[191] The remains of his cell, apparently a man-made cave, are a silent witness to this faithful contemporary of the Great Hermit. About 5 m. east of this cave, Abûnâ Shârûbîm wrote in Arabic the name of St. Antony by placing small rocks on the slope.

As one proceeds further, after a very strenuous climb of about 100 m., one eventually reaches a small terrace. From here one has a magnificent view over the Wâdî ‘Arabah, though one does not see the Red Sea as stated by some travellers. Furthermore, the monastery cannot be seen because of a hill which rises between the monastery and the cave. The cave is 680 metres above the Red Sea and 276 metres above the monastery at 28° 55' latitude and 30° 3' longitude, about two kilometres south-east of the monastery.[192] Whereas Fedden saw "nothing in the cave beyond an improvised altar cut in the rock,"[193] a wooden table now serves as altar. The table was taken up to and into the cave in parts, and was put together on the spot. Three icons, two of Christ and one of St. Antony were placed in the cave in 1900. On the south wall of the cave are numerous mediaeval graffiti indicating that travellers in years past visited the cave. Among these graffiti is the name of Fr. Bernadus, 1626, as well as a date of 1641 without a name.

The cave of St. Antony comprises four parts: the terrace, the tunnel, the cave and the balcony. The tunnel (at ground level 34 cm. wide and at breast height 98 cm. wide) connects the terrace with the cave. The balcony of St. Antony's cave is located about 3 m. below the terrace. It is here where the Saint used to make his palm-leaf baskets. At one time, once a year on January 30th,[194] a service used to be held in the cave.[195] This practice, however, seems to have been discontinued. An expedition to the cave of the great hermit is certainly worth the trouble for it provides one with an unforgettable experience.

---

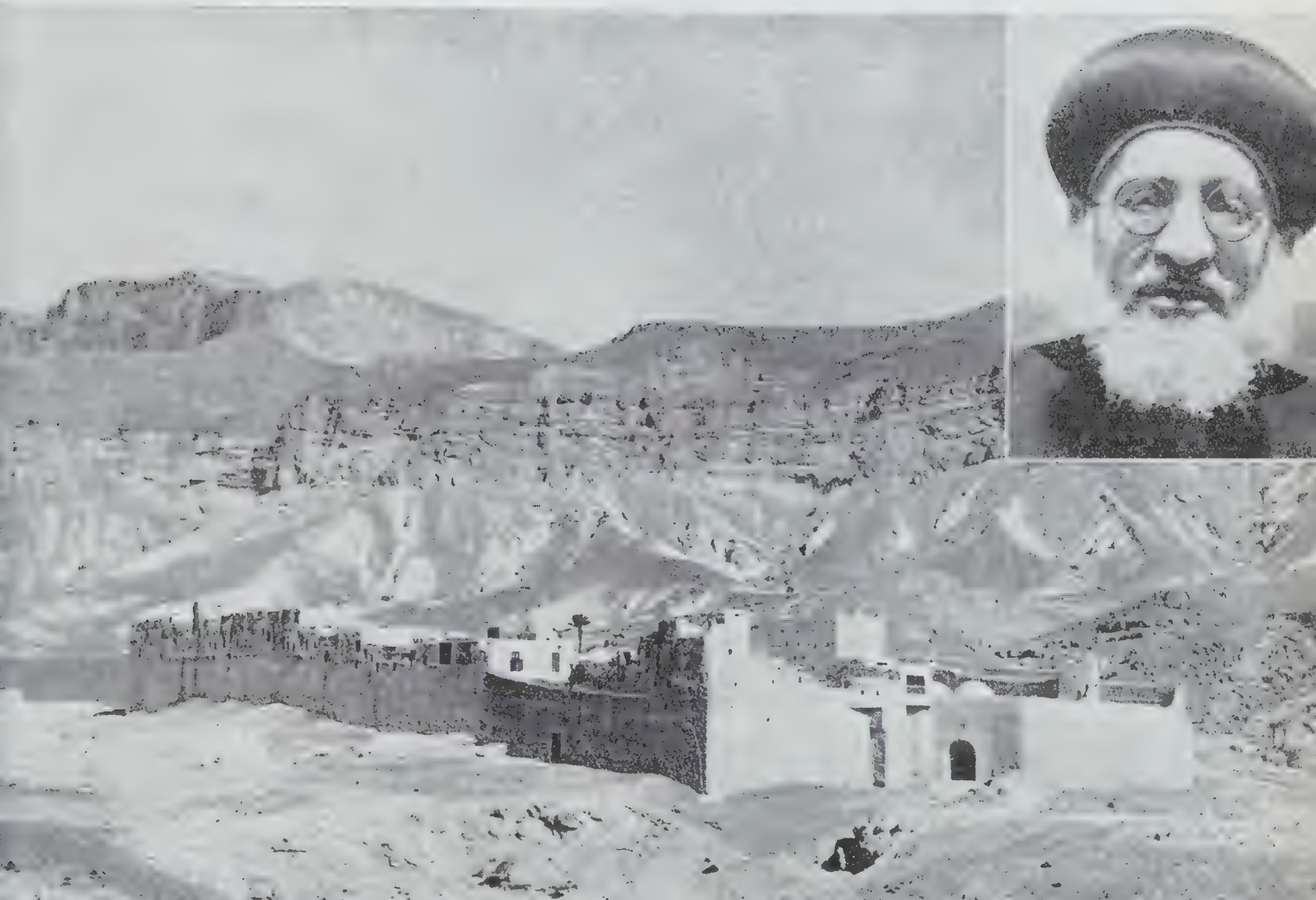
(191) *Ibid.*

(192) Jullien, *op. cit.*, 45-46.

(193) Fedden, *op. cit.*, 60.

(194) *i.e.* Tubah 22nd = January 30, and January 31 in Leap Years, according to the Gregorian Calendar. The Feast of St. Antony is celebrated on January 17th in the Greek and Latin Church.

(195) Fedden, *loc. cit.*

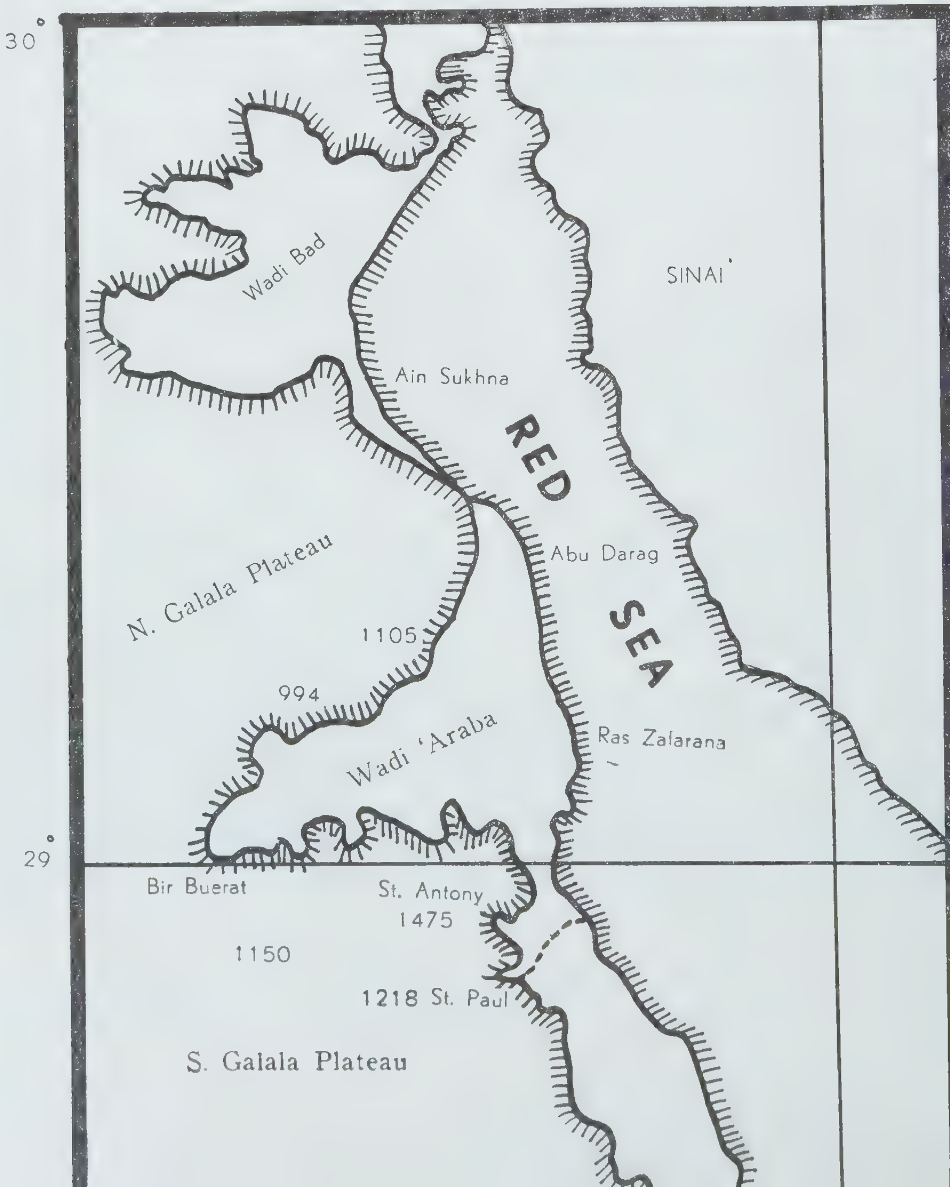


Jean Doresse

DAIR ANBA BULA

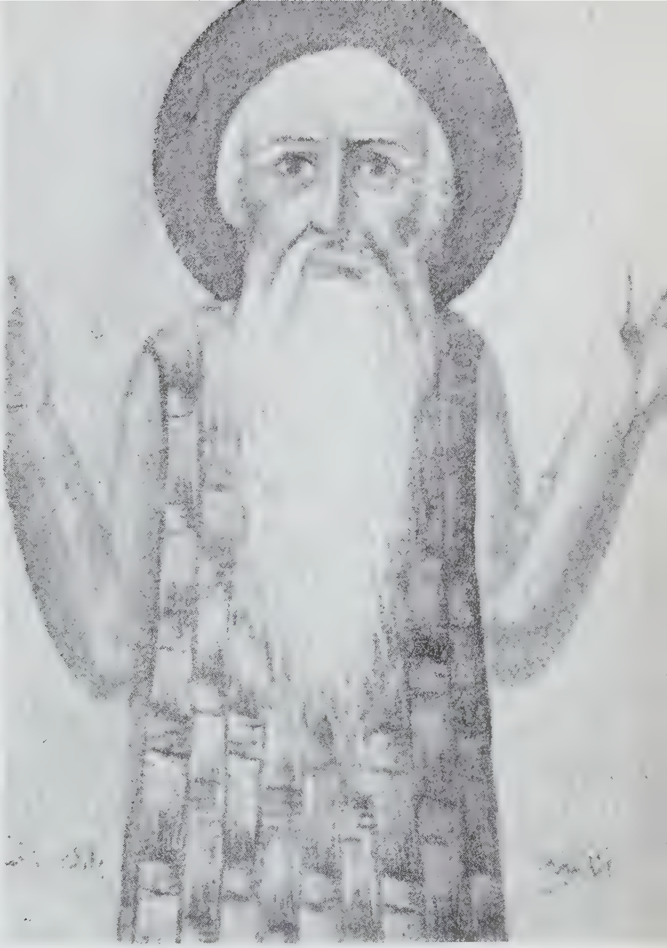
Inset, Anbâ Arsânîûs, Bishop of the Monastery of St. Paul.

Inside Dair Anbâ Bûlâ. In the background on the left, the Church of St. Paul.


30°
Wadi Bad
SINAI
Ain Sukhna
RED SEA
Abu Darag
N. Galala Plateau
1105
994
Wadi 'Araba
Ras Zafarana
29°
Bir Buerat
St. Antony
1475
1150
1218 St. Paul
S. Galala Plateau

Topographical Map for the Monasteries of SS. Antony and Paul. (1 mm.-1 km.)

St. Paul



Dair Anbâ Bûlâ

1. The Monastery and the Saint

THOUGH the Monastery of St. Paul the Theban,[1] or Dair Anbâ Bûlâ, may not be the oldest Coptic monastery, it was founded in memory of the first hermit of whom we have any knowledge. Information about the history of Dair Anbâ Bûlâ is extremely sketchy. Actually, there is no independent history of the monastery.[2] Even the monks are unable to supply the desired information.

Several factors would explain the paucity of historical data. The Monastery of St. Paul always has existed in the shadow of St. Antony's Monastery. Geographically speaking, it has been more isolated than

---

(1) In Coptic texts his name is invariably Paule which in Arabic becomes Bûlâ.

(2) This opinion is shared by Johann Georg when he says: "Die Literatur über das Pauluskloster ist sehr dürftig." Johann Georg, *Neueste Streifzüge durch die Kirchen und Klöster Aegyptens,* 17.

St. Antony's and traditionally speaking, it has never received the ecclesiastical and popular attention that the Monastery of St. Antony has attracted. This is due in part to its identification with Anbâ Bûlâ, who has never been regarded as having played the dynamic inspirational role in Coptic tradition which has been attributed to St. Antony. One has almost the impression that, if the Monastery of St. Paul is dealt with at all, the description of it given by visitors, whether lay or ecclesiastics, always reveals it as an inferior monastery which has little, if anything, to contribute to our knowledge of monasticism.

The geographical isolation of the monastery, due to its mountainous and rocky surroundings, has made it very difficult for travellers to visit it. Furthermore, the monastery is about one-seventh the size of St Antony's, and its source of wealth in the Nile valley is just a fraction of that of its sister monastery at Mount Clysma. One feels sometimes that, in spite of its old age and its long tradition, it has been treated rather like a step-child. St. Antony's fame travelled from shore to shore, St. Macarius' ascetic enthusiasm inspired literally thousands to follow him into the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. St. Pachomius saw in his lifetime the fruits of his energetic labour and discipline. On the other hand, St. Paul the Theban, though he was the first born of all desert monks, the prince of the anchorites, has left us no rules to be followed, no theology to be studied, but only a cave. And it is around this cave, the first known cave of Christian asceticism, that the Monastery of St. Paul was built.

Like St. Antony of Mount Clysma, St. Samuel of Mount Qalamûn or St. Macarius of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, St. Paul of the South Qalâlah Mountain is considered the healer and the protector, the helper and the sustainer of the local population, which consists exclusively of a few Bedouins roaming through the desert with their sheep, goats or camels. Although St. Antony made a much more profound impression upon the history of the Christian Church than St. Paul did, the Bedouins have felt and still feel differently about it. They prefer to pray to their Anbâ Bûlâ for assistance in ill-health and trouble, because as they say, "he is so much more ready to receive the prayers of the poor, and thus responds so much more quickly than Anbâ Antûnîûs, and, of course, that is all that matters."

Whether St. Paul actually was the first hermit to live apart for practicing asceticism is difficult to ascertain. De Lacy O'Leary feels that St. Paul was simply the first monk to retire to the solitude of the desert. In many villages in Egypt, where there were Christian congregations, there were some devout persons who lived apart and devoted themselves to religious exercises.[3]

We do not know a great deal about St. Paul the Theban, and what we know comes to us through the writings of St. Jerome. This account has been severely criticized because of the stress it lays on the miraculous,[4] and Hardy goes even so far as to say that "in spite of St. Jerome's story of St. Paul, who is at best a symbolic figure and at worst a pious fraud, St. Athanasius[5] is correct in telling us that Anthony was the first to withdraw to the desert."[6] Now this is exactly in contradiction to the testimony of the History of the Holy Fathers as compiled by Palladius,[7] where we find, even 1500 years ago, the same critical assertions "how there were many who contradicted this opinion and who asserted with firmness that Mâr Antony was the first and the prince of them all... but if we wish to learn the whole truth we shall discover that it was not Mâr Anthony who was the first that dwelt in the desert, but the blessed man Mâr Paulus. For I myself have seen the disciples of Mâr Anthony who buried him,[8] and they it was who related unto us the history of the man Paulus the anchorite."[9] One thing seems certain, and that is that a tradition which claimed a hermit called Paul — the name, however, is immaterial — as being the first anchorite to inhabit the desert, in face of the indisputable tradition which assigns this honour to St. Antony, must have been based on actual fact and not on fiction.

It may be interesting to relate the *Vita Pauli* as it comes from the lips of one of the fathers of Dair Anbâ Bûlâ. At the south wall of the Cave Church of Anbâ Bûlâ there stands a modern marble feretory which can be illuminated by a fluorescent light tube hanging above it, though the monks told me that they light it only once a year at Christmas.[10] The inscription on the tomb reads: "Born in Alexandria in the year 228 A.D. died in the year 343 A.D."[11] Standing in front of

---

(3) O'Leary in Glanville, *The Legacy of Egypt*, 317-31.

(4) There are still scholars who doubt the historicity of St. Paul the Theban. *Cf.* Johann Georg, *op. cit.*, 16.

(5) St. Athanasius wrote also a biography of St. Paul which unfortunately is no longer extant. It is quoted in the abridged form in the *Synaxarium*.

(6) Hardy, *Christian Egypt : Church and People*, 37.

(7) Palladius' *Paradise of the Holy Fathers* was written in 420 A.D. at the request of Lausus, a high ranking officer at the court of Theodosius II. For this reason the work of Palladius has been frequently referred to as the Lausiac History.

(8) *Cf.* p. 18.

(9) Palladius, *The Paradise or Garden of the Holy Fathers...* I, 197.

(10) A small electric generator, too small actually to provide the monastery with sufficient power, was installed in 1951.

(11) Johann Georg speaks of a "hölzernen Sarg" or "Holzkasten", a wooden box! Johann Georg, *op. cit.*, 22.

the feretory of the Saint, Abûnâ Damîân al-Bûlî told the following story.

"Our Anbâ Bûlâ was a young man when the Christians were persecuted,[12] and these persecutions were most severe at Alexandria. His parents had died while he was still a young man,[13] and so like St. Antony he lived with his sister. But they had trouble, and so he left the city and all the worldly things and came out here to live. He used to live here all by himself, and the wild animals would stay with him in his cave, and there was no trouble between the lions and the other wild animals and Anbâ Bûlâ. The crows that lived in the mountains fed him, and he prayed all his life. Then one day Anbâ Antûnîûs went to visit him. At that time, Anbâ Antûnîûs was an old man too, and the walk across the mountains is not an easy one. But the Lord was good to them, and Anbâ Antûnîûs followed the animals and the wild beasts and the crows and he found the cave of Anbâ Bûlâ. Still to-day, once a year some monks from Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs come over here on the feast-day of Anbâ Bûlâ to celebrate the Divine Liturgy. On the feast-day of Anbâ Antûnîûs, two of our monks go over to Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs. Anbâ Bûlâ made a great impression upon Anbâ Antûnîûs, and they became great friends and both of them were fed with heavenly food. Then, one day, Anbâ Bûlâ died, and Anbâ Antûnîûs was there at the time. But he did not know what to do, and so he prayed and sang psalms. And as he meditated about the loss of his friend, there came two big lions and Anbâ Antûnîûs was frightened. But the lions wagged their tails. They had been sent by God to dig a grave with their paws. These lions you see on all the holy icons of Anbâ Bûlâ. And Anbâ Antûnîûs took Anbâ Bûlâ and placed him in the grave, and prayed, and thanked God. Anbâ Antûnîûs then took the tunic of palm-leaves which Anbâ Bûlâ used to wear, and he wore it on special days, as on feasts."

With regard to their patron-saint, the monks of Dair Anbâ Bûlâ were more fortunate than those of Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs. Anbâ Bûlâ's tomb which is located in the south-eastern part of the South Qalâlah Plateau served as an inspiration, and young men from the Nile valley and the Delta flocked to the Red Sea Desert in imitation of the first hermit. There is a tradition, however, that claims that the bodily remains of Anbâ Bûlâ were transferred to Constantinople in 1240, and from there to Venice in 1381, and, at a later date, even to Budapest.

---

(12) This refers to the persecutions of Decius (201-251) and Valerian (253-260).

(13) According to St. Jerome, Anbâ Bûlâ was 16 years of age when his parents died.

For it was under the patronage of this desert hermit that the monastic order of the Paulanes was founded in Hungary sometime in the 15th century.[14]

There is good reason to believe that the Monastery of St. Paul was founded about the same time, perhaps a little later, than that of Anbâ Antûnîûs. Johann Georg's belief that the monastery was organized at the beginning of the fifth century is probably the most likely date so far suggested. A tradition quoted by Butcher[15] informs us that the monastery was restored by the Emperor Justinian (483-565 A.D.) for the purpose of making it available to Melkite monks.

2. The Early Pilgrims

The monastery must have been well known by the time of the sixth century, for we hear that Antoninus Martyr,[16] a native of Placentia, visited the shrine between 560-570 A.D. "Then we (Antoninus and his travelling companion John) came through the desert to the cave of the blessed Paul, which is named Syracumba, near a fountain, which up to the present time waters the whole place."[17]

An isolated Ethiopian reference informs us that Ghabrîâl ibn Turaik, the 70th Patriarch, lived for three years in banishment in the Monastery of St. Paul, where he is supposed to have written al-Hawi al-Kabir.[18]

Abû Sâlih the Armenian, writing at the beginning of the 13th century, mentions the Monastery of Anbâ Bûlâ. It seems by that time the monastery had become totally dependent upon St. Antony's monastery. "Within the desert is the monastery of St. Paul. It stands on the bank of the Salt Sea, and between it and the monastery of Al-Jummaizah there is a journey of two days through the desert. Monks in priests' orders and deacons come from the monastery of the great Antony to the monastery to celebrate the liturgy in it by turns. It stands in the Wâdî 'Arabah,[19] near the pool of Miriam, and it is near

---

(14) Johann Georg, *op. cit.*, 16.

(15) Butcher, *The Story of the Church of Egypt,* I, 327, f. Grisar, (Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie, 1902, 760-770, and 1903, 776-780), has shown that the attribution of this work to a certain Antoninus is incorrect. The pilgrimage was merely made under the patronage of Antoninus Martyr, the patron saint of Placentia (Piacenza). See also *Revue Biblique*, XII, (1903), 159; Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, I, 317.

(16) Antoninus Martyr, *Of the Holy Places Visited*, 34.

(17) Geyer, *Itinera Hierosolymitana, saeculi IV-VII*. 188.

(18) Graf, *Gesch. d. christl. arab. Lit.* II, 327 n.

(19) The Wâdî 'Arabah is a valley running from the west to the east between the Nile and the Red Sea. The monastery, however, is not located in the Wâdî 'Arabah.

Mount Sinai, but divided from it by the passage over the Salt Sea."[20] Falling into the same period is a manuscript from which Evelyn White quotes.[21] This document asserts that the Dair Anbâ Bûlâ belonged to the Syrians at one time. "Let the Syrian brethren who come after us to this monastery know that in the convent of Abba Paulus, beside the Monastery of Mâr Antonius, which belonged to the Syrians like this, there are many Syriac books still. But because of what was to come, the Syrians were driven out, thence the Egyptians took it..."

Before he died, Ogier de Saint-Cheron, first Seigneur d'Anglure, had resolved to perform a devout pilgrimage to the Holy Places, including the Monastery of St. Paul the Theban. In 1395, he set out with a group of French pilgrims, and after having visited the Monastery of St. Antony, they marched along the Red Sea to the Monastery of St. Paul where they found sixty monks of the same habit, rite and piety as the brotherhood of St. Antony. After visiting the hermitage of the First Desert Saint, the pilgrims retraced their way to Cairo on December 4.[22]

In 1421, Ghillebert de Lannoy set out on his second pilgrimage which was also to include the Monastery of St. Paul, which according to his description was situated between mountains, and built around a spring of water. It was inhabited by Jacobite Christians, who were subject to those of the Monastery of St. Antony. Ghillebert also mentioned the garden with its palms in the monastery.[23]

One of the first maps (1486) to place the Monasteries of SS. Paul and Antony correctly between the Red Sea and the Nile was the *Geographica* of Bernhard von Breydenbach.[24]

In the first half of the 15th century, Maqrîzî included Dair Anbâ Bûlâ as the eighth monastery in his list of 86 monasteries. He mentions that the Monastery of Anbâ Bûlâ is also referred to as the monastery of the sons of Paul or the monastery of An-Numur.[25] This monastery, Maqrîzî continues, is located in the region west of at-Tûr (Sinai) in the vicinity of a spring, where the travellers stop for a rest. There is a tradition with the monks which says that Miriam, the sister of Moses, washed and cleansed herself in it when Moses camped with the Israelites in the vicinity of Clysma.

---

(20) Abû Sâlih, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and some neighbouring countries...*, 167.

(21) Evelyn White, *The Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn*, II, 390.

(22) D'Anglure, *Le Saint Voyage de Jérusalem par le Baron d'Anglure en 1395*, 174.

(23) Ghillebert, *Oeuvres de Ghillebert de Lannoy*, 70.

(24) Kammerer, *La Mer Rouge, l'Abyssinie et l'Arabie*, I, 27.

(25) "Numur" in Arabic means leopard, panther, tiger.

Anbâ Bûlâ came from Alexandria, and his father had left to him and to his brother considerable wealth. When his brother began to quarrel about the money, Anbâ Bûlâ left him in disgust. When he saw a corpse which was about to be buried, he came to himself, and he began to think seriously about life. He travelled through the country until he reached this spring, where he stayed, while God looked after him. Then St. Antony passed by and stayed with him and built this monastery above his tomb. Between this monastery and the sea are three hours (of travel). The monastery has a garden with palm-trees and vineyards as well as a spring of running water.[26]

In the last decade of the 15th century, Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs suffered severely by the revolt and subsequent occupation of the Bedouins. It is quite likely, that Dair Anbâ Bûlâ experienced a similar fate,[27] for we read in the history of the Monastery of the Syrians that Anbâ Ghabrîâl VII (1525 - 1568) assisted in the rebuilding of this monastery. Of the thirty monks whom he commissioned for the task of reconstructing the monasteries in the Thebaid, ten were sent to Dair Anbâ Bûlâ.[28]

3. The 17th and 18th Century Travellers

One of the first visitors in the 17th century may well have been Fr. Bernadus, O.F.M., who left his graffiti on the haikal screen of the Church of St. Antony in the Monastery of St. Antony. It is quite likely, that the three dates mentioned in his inscription refer to at least two distinct arrivals at the monastery. It is probable, therefore, that he, following the example of other pilgrims and visitors, also visited the Monastery of St. Paul and then returned to the Monastery of St. Antony. His graffiti mention dates between December 31st, 1625 and January 31st, 1626. Graffiti by this friar have not been discovered at Dair Anbâ Bûlâ, though numerous ancient graffiti can be found on the west wall of the Church of Anbâ Bûlâ.

When Fr. Coppin, who served as French consul in Damietta, Fr. Agathangelus, O.F.M., Mr. Bayart of Marseille, Mr. Antonio Messinois and two other monks had completed their visit to the Monastery of St. Antony in 1638, they decided to go on and to visit the monks of the Monastery of St. Paul.[29] The party had stayed at St. Antony's for

---

(26) Wüstenfeld, *Maqrizi's Geschichte der Copten*, 88-89.

(27) "Im Jahre 1484 wurden die beiden Wüstenklöster des hlg. Antonius and des hlg. Paulus gestürmt und die Mönche erschlagen." Strothmann, ***Die** Koptische Kirche in der Neuzeit*, 4.

(28) Monks of Dair as-Suriân, *Sîrat al-Anbâ Yuhannis Kamâ...*, 53.

(29) Coppin, *Relation des Voyages faites dans la Turquie, la Thébaide, et la Barbarie*, 313.

three days, and prior to their departure into the "unknown", which they felt was inhabited by ferocious Arabs and tigers, they celebrated the Holy Mass, recommending themselves to the protection of the two desert solitaries, St. Antony and St. Paul. Having arrived safely at St. Paul's, Fr. Coppin visited the various places of interest. He remarks about the Church of St. Paul that it appeared to him like a basement built on the place, where the Saint lived for some sixty years of his life. Then, Fr. Coppin comments upon the cruciform construction of the church with its three altars in the sanctuary, of which the principal altar faced the north, while the other two altars faced either the east or the west. Before their return to the Monastery of St. Antony, they went on a tour throughout the monastery visiting especially the garden with its spring. The visitors concluded their stay by celebrating the Holy Mass, and then they departed to the Red Sea.[30]

All that we know of Fr. Gerard's visit to the Monastery of St. Paul is the date (1639), and the fact that he went there from the Monastery of St. Antony.[31]

In 1692, de Maillet mentions the Cave of St. Paul, which like the famous Monastery of St. Antony is located between Suez and Qusair, at a distance of five to seven hours from the sea. Apparently, he saw also other caves or monastic dwellings which were especially built for the exercise of penance to be executed by these hermits. Mentioning the fact that the monks sleep on the floor, he states that lying on the ground in Egypt is very common to the way of life in the agricultural areas.[32] His passing remarks indicate, that he did not visit the monastery.

It seems that a second devastation ruined the efforts of Anbâ Ghabrîâl, for we hear that Anbâ Yûânnis XVI (1676 — 1718) reconstructed the monastery in 1701, after 119 years of desolation.[33]

In 1716, an anonymous pilgrim visited the Monastery of Anbâ Bulâ. He was probably the first traveller who sketched the monastery, and afterwards dedicated his work to the Right Reverend Father in God, Nicholas, Lord Bishop of Exeter.[34]

As regards the supposed unified headship of both the desert monasteries in the 13th and 14th centuries, there appear to be different opinions. Johann Georg tells us that, until the middle of the 19th

---

(30) *Ibid.*, 317.

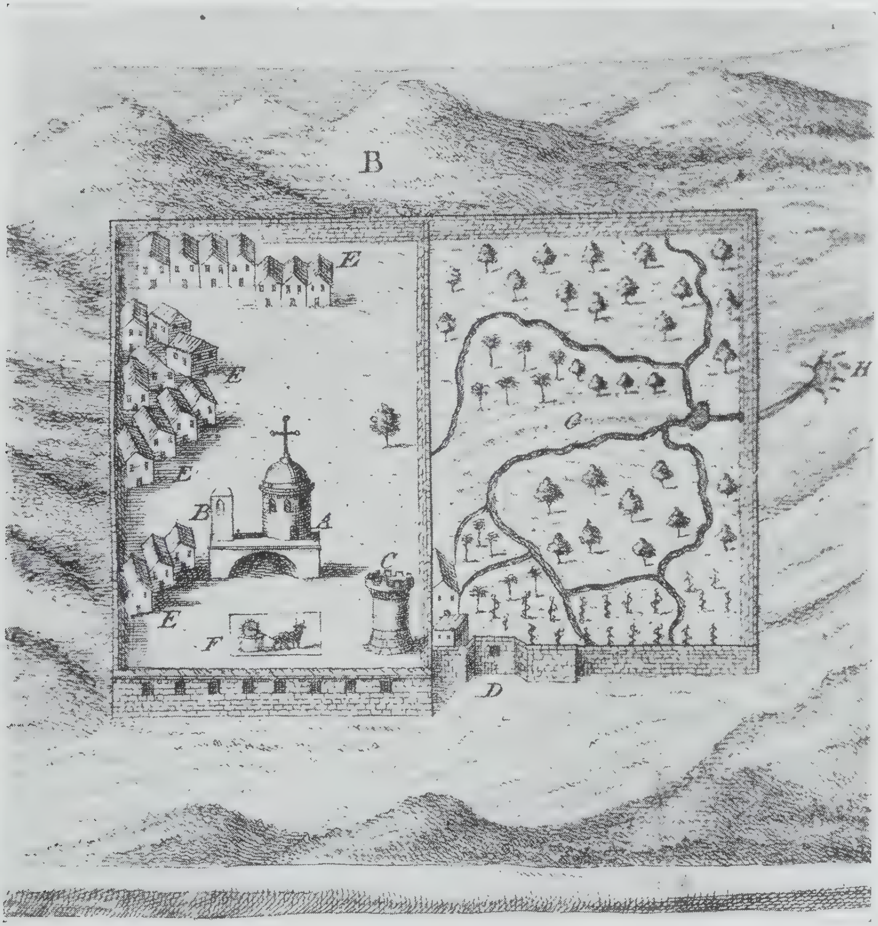
(31) Golubovich, *Biblioteca Bio-Bibliografica della Terra Santa...* III., *Etiopia Francescana*, I, 187.

(32) De Maillet, *Description de l'Egypte*, 321.

(33) Fedden, *A Study of the Monastery of St. Antony*, 43.

(34) Pococke, *A Description of the East*, 128.

century, one hegoumenos was in charge of both monasteries. He continues by saying that he was told that the older monks used to live in Dair Anbâ Bûlâ, while the younger monks inhabited Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs, He comes to the conclusion, however, that this is "unbewiesener Schwatz", just unproved idle talk.[35] The practice of a unified



THE MONASTERY OF ST. PAUL.

Pococke, Richard, *A Descripiion of the East*, I.

London : Bowyer, 1743.

Details of this anonymous sketch include : (A) The Church and Cave of St. Paul, (B) the Bell, (C) the Tower, (D) the Window by which they enter, (E) the Cells of the monks, (F) the Mill, (G) the Garden, (H) a spring of water that is a little salt.

---

(35) Johann Georg, *op. cit.*, 17.

headship is also supported by Labîb Habashî who states that the management of the monasteries was entrusted to one hegoumenos until the middle of the 19th century, and that the young monks had to go first to Dair Anbâ Bûlâ. Then they were transferred to Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs, until "they became old enough to return to Dair Anbâ Bûlâ."[36] Anbâ Yûânnis XVII (1727 — 1745), who had been hegoumenos of Dair Anbâ Bûlâ, exercised the office of headship over both monasteries. For how long, and to what an extent the monasteries shared in a unified administration is difficult to ascertain.

About the time of our anonymous pilgrim, Fr. Claude Sicard, S.J. went with J.S. Assemani to the Red Sea Monasteries in search of manuscripts. After having stayed for some time at the Monastery of St. Antony, they departed on May 29, 1716 for their journey to the Monastery of St. Paul which the Arabs call Dair an-Numwan,[37] or the Monastery of the Tigers. The trip from Mount Clysma to St. Paul's took them fifteen hours, and upon their arrival at the Monastery, they were hoisted up by a pulley which took them inside the monastery. Though much smaller than the Monastery of St. Antony, it also contained a garden with very much the same vegetation as the Monastery on Mount Clysma. When they had set foot in the monastery, the monks conducted them in procession to the church, where they recited some prayers. The hegoumenos showed them the library, but the good and valuable books and the manuscripts had been removed. On the following day, which was Whitsunday, Fr. Sicard witnessed the Pentecostal celebrations of the monks.[38] The Church in which the services were conducted was not longer than thirty feet. After the celebrations, the visitors departed again to the Red Sea.

We have noted elsewhere that this monastery played a secondary role throughout its history. Nevertheless, the monastery provided several patriarchs and bishops, who through their work entered the pages of Coptic history. One of them was Anbâ Yûânnis, the 105th Patriarch, who succeeded Anbâ Butrus VI in 1726. John al-Mallawî had been the hegoumenos of the Monastery of St. Paul before he ascended the Patriarchal Throne.[39]

On the 11th of April, 1730, coming from the Monastery of St. Antony, le Sieur Granger arrived at the Monastery of St. Paul. He

---

(36) Habashî, "Al-Adyurah ash-Sharqîah wa'd-Dair al Muharraq," 51.

(37) *Numwan* apparently an orthographical mistake for *Numur*, *cf.* p. 96.

(38) Sicard, *Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses*, III, 300.

(39) Neale, *op. cit.*, II, 472.

mentioned the path that connects the two monasteries, by the use of which one could reach the Dair Anbâ Bûlâ in a matter of eight hours. This path is called Akabe by the Arabs.[40] Because of the wilderness around the monastery, the Copts refer to it as the Monastery of the Tigers. In describing the Church of St. Paul, Granger estimated it to be 32 feet long and 14 feet wide, and the walls were covered with paintings of saints. The wall of one of the haikals bore a Greek inscription which, interestingly enough, the natural historian reproduced in his book.[41] At the time of his visit, the monastery was inhabited by 14 monks, of whom five were priests and two wore the angelic habit.[42] On the following day, Granger departed from the monastery.

In 1737, Pococke visited Egypt, and although he did not go to the monastery, he reports that twenty-five monks lived there, that the monks cannot marry, but that widowers are accepted. It is said, he continues, that the monks eat but once a day, except on Saturdays and Sundays.[43]

Nicholas Savary, who visited the Monastery of St. Antony in 1777, did not go to the Monastery of St. Paul, because it was impossible to reach except by making a large circuit around the mountains. All he said was, that, like St. Antony's it is inhabited by Coptic monks who are just as poor and ignorant as those in the former monastery.[44]

In 1791, Paul Bruns wrote the *Neue systematische Erdbeschreibung von Aegypten*, in which he mentions the Monastery of St. Paul, which is referred to by the Arabs as the Monastery of the Tigers. The Monastery is situated on the eastern side of Mount Clysma, and two to three miles from the shores of the Red Sea. The numerous caves in the vicinity of the monastery are the work of the anchorites, who at one time inhabited the same.[45]

4. The 19th and 20th Century Travellers

Russian pilgrims and travellers came to Egypt as those of other nations, though only a few of them left any documents dealing with

---

(40) Granger, *Relation du Voyage fait en Egypte*, 115.

(41) *Ibid.*, 119. Granger is mistaken in so far as the inscription is a regular Coptic formula which is found inscribed over the doors of many haikals. *Cf.* Burmester, *A Guide to the Ancient Coptic Churches of Old Cairo*, 38 ff. The text, which Granger badly copied can only be partly translated. The first line is clearly readable and says : "Hail Temple of God... Hail Gate... Hail Gate... forgive sins."

(42) *i.e.* the schema. It is now conferred only on monks who are about to become bishops.

(43) Pococke, *op. cit.*, 128.

(44) Savary, *Lettres sur l'Egypte*, II, 58.

(45) Bruns, *op. cit.*, 298.

their experiences. In 1834-35, Avraam Norov described the Monastery of St. Paul. "It is situated on the mountain of Clysma at a distance of four versts[46] from the Monastery of St. Antony. But it is separated from it by such a high and abrupt rock that one is forced to take a circuitous way. This is why St. Antony travelled nearly two days before he reached the hermitage of St. Paul."[47] From the above account it is doubtful indeed, whether Norov ever visited the monastery.

In his book *Modern Egypt and Thebes,* Wilkinson mentions only briefly the "Dayr- Anbâ Boûlâ". Sir Gardener, who visited various parts of Egypt in 1837, compared the Monastery of St. Paul with that of St. Antony, and stated that, while the former one may be considered to be the principal monastery in Egypt, "Dayr Bolos claims for itself an equal rank, and one of the patriarchs has been chosen from its members, though Dayr Antonius surpasses it both in the number of monks as well as the general tone of its inmates."[48]

On March 14, 1839, Dr. Tattam visited the monastery of St. Paul. "They rode dromedaries; for it is scarcely safe to attempt riding a donkey over the broken mountain-path leading to the wild spot on which Mar Bolos is situated. It is enclosed by lofty mountains, and appears inaccessible to all but the natives of the Desert, who are in the habit of going thither to demand food. The monks here possess but few religious books, or did not choose to show more. They brought out a copy of St. John's Gospel in Coptic, and a copy of the Scriptures in Latin and Arabic, 4 vols. folio. The building is in better repair, than that of Mar Antonios, but not so large. The monks occasionally procure fish from the Red Sea, but at other times they live on coarse bread, soup of lentils and the fruits, which their garden produces."[49]

A rather interesting piece of evidence as to the ancient practice of penitential prostrations was recently brought to light by a painting of Joseph Bonomi. Bonomi, son of a famous Italian architect, visited Egypt once from 1824 to 1833 and again from 1844 until his death in 1878. Louis Keimer has reproduced the painting which shows the monks of Dair Anbâ Bûlâ praying in front of two large crosses. The subscription of the painting reads: "Drawing made in the convent of Paul the hermit in the eastern desert about the year 1840 by Joseph Bonomi." Keimer suggests to substitute the "0" in 1840 for a "4", though on

---

(46) One verst = 1.067 m.

(47) Norov, *Puteshestviye po Yegiptu i Nubii v 1834-35,* quoted by Piankoff, *Two Descriptions by Russian Travellers,* 62.

(48) Wilkinson, *Modern Egypt and Thebes,* II, 381.

(49) Platt, *Journal of a Tour through Egypt,* II, 97-98.

the other side of the picture the artist gives the date of 1842. We can be sure that around this time the monastery was visited by Bonomi, and furthermore, it is interesting to note that the practice of penitential prostrations of which Fr. Sicard had spoken, was still in use.[50] The painting has been reproduced as a woodcut in Sharpe's *The History of Egypt.*[51]

In 1847, the Russian Archimandrite Porphyrius Uspensky went as head of the first Russian delegation to Jerusalem to establish a Russian mission in the Holy Land.[52] Though he was not successful in this, his descriptions of the monasteries in the Thebaid are quite helpful. He went to the Monastery of St. Paul in 1850 accompanied by the hegoumenos of the Monastery of St. Antony and made the following observations. "The Cathedral Church of St. John the Baptist with a Chapel of the Archangel Michael was built in 1727 by the order of the 105th Patriarch, Anba Yohannes, according to the Arabic inscription on the central pillar of the church. The Church's best decoration is an icon of the Evangelist Mark, painted in Europe... In the north corner of the monastery is a small church dedicated to the 24 Elders of the Revelation. The church is entered from a parvis, to which one descends by a low flight of stairs... Next to this church, and separated from it by a wooden screen is the natural cave of St. Paul, where also the stone tomb of the Saint is located... The place is low and small, it is five feet long and four feet wide... a door leads into the adjoining sanctuary. It is dark there, as in a coffin. There is no cupola above the sanctuary as the cave was left untouched. In the south-west corner of the church there is a secret flight of stairs which leads into the contiguous church of St. Mercurius."[53]

In 1876, 1877, and 1878, Dr. Georg Schweinfurth visited the monasteries of the Red Sea Desert. In a highly romantic and flowery style Schweinfurth relates his impressions of the mysterious environment of the Monastery of St. Paul. The outer wall has a length of 455 metres,[54] and the pulley is in the eastern part of the monastery.

---

(50) Keimer, "Les Prosternations pénitentiaires des Moines du Couvent de St. Paul dans le désert de l'Est," 21.

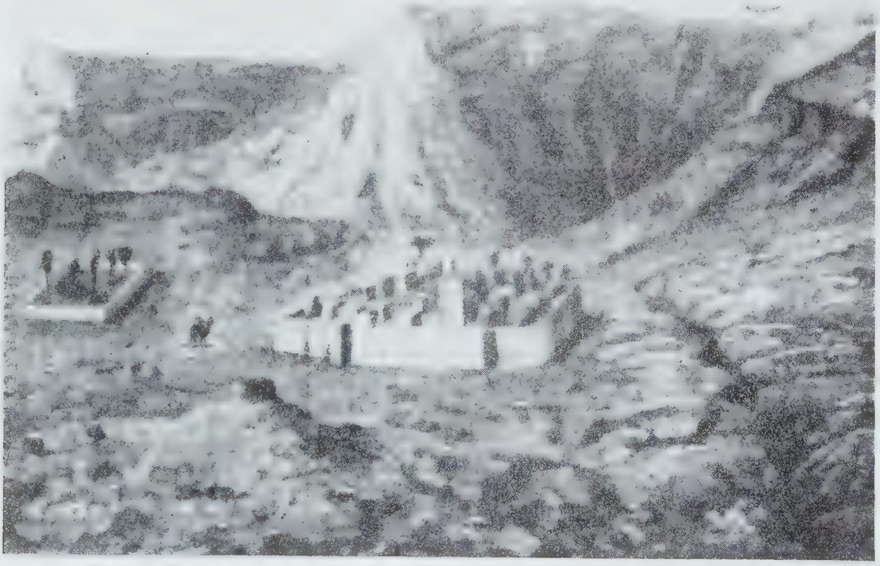
(51) Sharpe, *op. cit.*, II, 351.

(52) Nicholas I, Tsar of Russia, intended Russia to play the role of protector of the Orthodox Christians *in partibus infidelium.*

(53) Uspensky, *Puteshestviye po Egiptu i v monastyri Sviatago Antonia Velikago i Prepadobnago Parla Fiveyskago v 1850 godu,* quoted by Piankoff, *op, cit.*, 65.

(54) Schweinfurth, *Auf unbetretenen Wegen*, 198.

The dwellings of the 28 monks who inhabited the monastery at the time of his visit were built in two parallel streets. The spring, Schweinfurth records, provides the monks with cool, refreshing water with a minimum of mineral content. The old church which contains the tomb of the Patron seemed to have been renovated some two hundred years before. The walls of this church were covered with grotesque wall paintings. Many of the graffiti led Schweinfurth to believe that the monastery was visited by early pilgrims. He recognized a very ancient Gothic inscription by a certain monk Franz Sembacher.[55]



Jullien, 1883

DAIR ANBA BULA

Only a few years later in 1883, Fr. Michel Jullien, S. J., travelled with a party from the Monastery of St. Antony to the shores of the Red Sea, and from there to the Monastery of St. Paul, where he arrived late at night. As in the case of Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs, Mgr. Antûn Murqus, Mgr. François Sogaro and Fr. Jullien were pulled up

---

(55) *Ibid.*, 199. This graffito on the west wall of the Church of St. Paul has almost vanished, and all that can be identified are traces of gothic letters. Other rather ancient graffiti are also damaged which is unfortunate indeed, since they would have helped us in the reconstruction of the monastery's history.

by a rope to the wall. Then the party was ceremoniously received by the monks, and after this the civil reception commenced. The hegoumenos of the monastery was Abûnâ Ya'qûb who was in charge of a group of 25 monks of whom nine were laybrothers, sixteen hieromonks, ten of whom had the title Qummus.[56] One of the monks, Abûnâ Tâdrus, was nearly ninety years of age, and had lived some sixty years in the monastery.

After having spent an agreeable night at the monastery, the following day was begun with the celebration of the Holy Mass in the Cave of St. Paul. Fr. Jullien, like Schweinfurth, comments upon the pictures on the wall of the Church of St. Paul. The drawings which represent Saints and Biblical characters were, according to Jullien, the work of a monk of the monastery.

The monastery was situated on a hill about 800 metres high. The well which supplied the monks with sufficient water was in the northwest corner of the garden, and for that matter, there were altogether three wells.[57] From the Monastery of St. Paul the members of the party retraced their steps to the Antonian Monastery where the Reverend Fathers engaged in doctrinal debates regarding the return of the Coptic Church to the Latin Church.[58]

During the latter part of the 19th century, the name of the monastery was in the newspaper headlines, on account of the controversies between Anbâ Kîrillus V, and the Maglis al-Millî, for after many attempts at reconciliation between the two parties, the Patriarch withdrew to Dair al-Barâmûs, while the Metropolitan Yûânnis retired to Dair Anbâ Bûlâ, where, however, he remained for only five months.[59]

The Red Sea Monastery of St. Paul, if not the oldest (as wrongly assumed by Schweinfurth) is, nevertheless, one of the most remarkable, if not even the most impressive ancient Christian monument in Egypt.

In February 1904, Agnes Smith Lewis and Mrs. Margaret Dunlop Gibson visited the Monastery of St. Paul. Their guide went to Bûsh to obtain the permission from the hegoumenos which he received only after a great deal of difficulty. After Anbâ Arsânîûs had given his consent, he issued a letter of instruction to the monks of his monastery, advising them to show their books to the two ladies. If any of the monks, however, objected to the visit of the women, they were

---

(56) Jullien, *op. cit.*, 56.

(57) *Ibid.*, 65.

(58) *Cf.* p. 62.

(59) Strothmann, *op. cit.*, 43.

to be locked up together in a room during the period of their visit.[60] On the morning of the second day after their departure from St. Antony's Monastery, the ladies made their entrance to Dair Anbâ Bûlâ by rope and windlass, being heaved up by a rope-netting which was roughly sewn around their waists. Once in the monastery, they were welcomed by Qummus Aqlâdîûs and some thirty monks, who received them ceremoniously in a service that lasted for two hours, and which was conducted in their honour with an eulogy on "our beloved sovereign Queen Victoria, and a lament over her death."[61] Then, they examined the small store of manuscripts, photographed some of the monks, and visited the other churches. At the end of their visit they were again conducted to the trap door, and sewed up in a rope-netting. "The windlass was turned, I closed my eyes, and just as I opened them to ascertain if I had begun to descend, I found myself on mother earth." On their departure, the Qummus and three monks escorted the ladies down the valley.[62]

In March 1908, Fr. Fortunatus Vignozzi da Seano, accompanied by Fr. Gottfried Schilling and Mr. August Schuler, visited the Red Sea Monasteries of SS. Antony and Paul, where they spent several days with the monks trying to impress upon them the importance of belonging to the Catholic Church.[63]

In the latter part of the third decade of the 20th century, Marcus Simaika concerned himself with the preservation of the manuscripts and books in the Monastery of Anbâ Bûlâ. This work was completed in 1929, and Marcus Simaika stipulated that none of the books were to be removed from the library.

There is no doubt that in years gone by the monastery was inaccessible for most travellers. This opinion is still shared by Strothmann,[64] and, as pointed out elsewhere,[65] this was one of the main reasons for its almost complete isolation. Fowler mentions that "it has scarcely ever been visited by Europeans, so that it is impossible to say what treasures, in the way of manuscripts and antiquities, might be discovered within its precincts."[66]

During his last visit to Egypt in 1930, Johann Georg, Duke of Saxony, managed to realize his dream and to visit the Monastery of St. Paul.

---

(60) Lewis, "Hidden Egypt", 746.

(61) *Ibid.*, 753.

(62) *Ibid.*, 753.

(63) Teodosio Somigli, *Il P. Fortunato Vignozzi da Seano, O.F.M.*, 84.

(64) Strothmann, *op. cit.*, 125.

(65) *Cf.* p. 92.

(66) Fowler, *Christian Egypt : Past, Present and Future*, 199.

Johann Georg travelled on the 260 t. "Argyll" from Port Tawfiq to Za'frânah (though he does not mention his place of disembarkation) and from there by camel to the monastery.[67]

On his way to the monastery, the Duke chanced to meet Mr. Whittemore, who had spent two days at Dair Anbâ Bûlâ studying the wall-paintings in the Cave Church. On his arrival at the monastery the Duke visited the three churches. First, he went to see the "New Church" which he considered had been built in the 17th century. This church, the monks informed him, was normally used for services. The icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which the monks attribute to the hand of St. Luke the Evangelist, was identified by Johann Georg as belonging to the latter part of the 19th century.[68] From the "New Church" he went to the ancient Church of St. Paul which he assigned to the sixth or seventh century. His criticism of the wall-paintings — following closely the remarks of Schweinfurth and Fr. Jullien — is rather harsh. He noticed the wooden feretory of the Saint, but doubts the authenticity of the claims of the monks that it contained the relics of St. Paul. The third church, that of St. Mercurius, obviously did not leave a lasting impression upon the visitor. He mentions that the church had been built in a rough architectural manner, and that it was quite insignificant.[69] After four pleasant hours at the monastery, Johann Georg left again for the Red Sea, in order to embark on his ship which took him back to Suez.

Between 1949 and 1951, Jean Doresse visited several times the Red Sea Monasteries of SS. Antony and Paul where he studied their history, architecture and wall-paintings for the *Commission des Fouilles Archéologiques*. His work is highly praiseworthy, especially for the magnificent photographs which he took of the exterior of the monasteries.[70]

On the 12th of April 1956, Fr. Gabriele Giamberardini, O. F. M., together with his companions left the Monastery of Anbâ Antûnîûs for that of Anbâ Bûlâ, where they were hospitably received. Comparing the Monastery of St. Paul with the Antonian monastery, the party had the impression that it was more alive and better organized than the latter. While they were not permitted to enter the library of the Monastery of Anbâ Antûnîûs, Abûnâ Sulaimân al-Bûlî showed them the

---

(67) Johann Georg, *op. cit.*, 20.

(68) *Ibid.*

(69) *Ibid.*, 23.

(70) Doresse, "Deux Monastères Coptes Oubliés," *La Revue des Arts*, March 1952, 3-14.

library of the Monastery of St. Paul, where they saw, among other volumes in Arabic and Coptic, an Arabic-Latin Bible which had been printed in Rome in 1671. At the time of their visit, 26 monks inhabited the monastery. Among the monks whom they met was Abûnâ Sîdrâk, the hegoumenos of the monastery, Abûnâ Sâwîrûs and the young Abûnâ al-Hâbib Sulaimân. Abûnâ Damîân, whom Fr. Gabriele had met before at the Monastery of Anbâ Samwîl, dominated the situation by his personality. According to the other monks, he was described as the "Gazetta del convento", knowing everything that there is to be known.

Also, in the spring of 1956, members of the Desert Institute visited the Red Sea monasteries, studying the flora of the two Qalâlahs and of St. Antony's, where the monks complained about fungus attacks on their trees and crops. Especially the olive trees suffered from this disease. From there the botanists went to the Monastery of St. Paul, where they also visited the garden inside the monastery. And again they heard the complaints of the monks, that their dates were falling in an unripe stage, and that their vegetables and fruits suffered from the same kind of fungus attacks. Dr. Taeckholm enumerates the fruit trees at the Monastery of St. Paul : olives, oranges, pomegranates, figs, dates, and guavas.[72]

5. The Monastery and its Monks in the Middle of the 20th Century

To reach the monastery one follows the Red Sea road as far as 26 km. south of the lighthouse station of Za'frânah. This road, recently repaired by the Shell Company, permits speedy travelling. A new (1958) sign in English and in Arabic points the way to the monastery. The mountainous and rocky, and sometimes mysterious environment through which the track leads is pointedly described by Schweinfurth : "A terrible wilderness of mountainous country constitutes the immediate environment of St. Paul's. It is a precipitious cliff into the abyss, a gate of hell, more horrible than the phantasy of Dante could express it." [73]

After 13 km. of almost continuous bends and sharp curves, the monastery suddenly appears from around the last corner. The road is fair, except for the last 120 metres. A steep and rocky ascent leads to the large eastern gate which is lowered only to accommodate vehicles and camel caravans. The gate at the eastern end of the south wall

---

(71) Giamberardini, *S. Antonio Abate Astro del Deserto*, 45-50.

(72) For a comprehensive study of the flora in the monasteries, *cf.* Taeckholm, "Report on the Botanical Excursion of the Desert Institute to the Red Sea Coast and the two Qalâlahs in Spring 1956," *Bulletin de l'Institut du Désert d'Egypte*, VI, 2, July 1956.

(73) Schweinfurth, *op. cit.*, 185 f.

is that used by visitors, and it leads to the guesthouse and the other main buildings of the monastery.

The 13 km. car-track from the main Red Sea road to the monastery is used regularly by the monastery supply-trucks that provide the monastery with food and other necessities from Bûsh. In this connection it might be well to mention, that the supply-trucks for Dair Anbâ Bûlâ travel from Bûsh via Cairo and Suez to the monastery and not via Kuraimât and through the Wâdî 'Arabah.

The visitor's book which gives the names of the foreign and Egyptian travellers reveals interesting data as to the monastery's relative closeness to the "world." As in the case of the Monastery of St. Antony, the former large number of British visitors was due to the British military installations in and around the Red Sea area.

Year	British	French	German	Netherlands	U.S.A.	U.S.S.R.	Other Nationals
1947/50	168	27	0	7	1	0	6
1951/52	0	0	54	0	1	4	4
1953/56	135	13	17	0	10	2	46
1957/58	92	15	5	1	2	0	4

In addition to these visitors, many Egyptians have visited the monastery. It is expected that the number of visitors will increase as time goes on, since many people in Egypt now possess a motor-car, and also because the Red Sea area has now become a camping and holiday resort. I understand that the Tourist Administration entertains plans to make the Red Sea beaches more attractive to the tourist. It goes without saying, that the peace and the quietness around the Monastery of St. Paul will be seriously endangered, as more and more city dwellers go for their week-ends to the Red Sea beaches.

Each of the eight inhabited monasteries has its particular characteristics. I fully share Jules Leroy's feeling about Dair Anbâ Bûlâ, when he says: "Il donne l'impression d'être plus intime et plus soigné." [74] It radiates by far the most friendly and relaxing atmosphere, and the monks go out of their way to make the visitor feel at home, as much as it is possible. Yet it must not be considered that this hospitality is a sign of spiritual laxity. While ladies are permitted to stay overnight in the guestrooms of the Monastery of St. Antony, the same liberality is not offered by the monks of St. Paul's Monastery. Bishop Arsâniûs of the Monastery of St. Paul appears to be quite strict on the matter,

---

(74) Leroy, *Moines et Monastères du Proche Orient*, 55.

and points to the possibility that lady visitors have in staying overnight in the sister monastery at Mount Clysma, a distance of 84 km. via Za'frânah. The reason for objecting to female visitors staying overnight may be due to the limited space of the guesthouse.

This attitude, however, seems to have a long tradition, for Pococke, who wrote about the monastery in 1742, remarked that "a woman is not permitted to enter the convent." [75]

The guesthouse was completed in 1948 and provides nine beds. Johann Georg tells how during his visit in 1930 the guesthouse was being constructed. It must have been fairly well completed at that time, since he mentions a well furnished "salon" and a few bed-rooms.[76]

No visitor to the Monasteries of SS. Paul and Antony can fail to notice the desert crows that almost continually circle above the isolated inhabited desert areas. They nest in the mountain cliffs and crevices of the South Qalâlah and feed on the dates of the palm-trees and other eatables around the monastery. These birds, though they are the only living transmitters of the stories and traditions of Anbâ Bûlâ, are considered today a nuisance by the monks. Schweinfurth [77] even reports that the monks engaged in hunting the desert crows in spite of their holy tradition in connection with Elijah[78] and Anbâ Bûlâ. As regards Elijah who had been led by God to seek refuge by the brook Cherith, the desert crows brought him food in the morning and the evening, and thus his life was preserved. In St. Jerome's biography of St. Paul, Anbâ Bûlâ tells Anbâ Antûnîûs: "Truly our Lord is merciful and pitiful in that he sendeth us a meal in this way. For behold, for fully sixty years I have been in the habit of receiving from this bird (a desert crow) half a loaf of bread daily, but at thy (St. Antony's) coming, behold, our Lord hath sent unto us a double portion of food because we are his servants." [79]

Christian iconography has never omitted the crow from the pictures of Anbâ Bûlâ and Anbâ Antûnîûs who, in most instances, appear together. But instead of feeding the crows, as the Venetians are in the habit of feeding their pigeons, the desert fathers of the Red Sea monasteries despise the birds. One late evening, talking with one of the monks, I was told the story of the "Secret of the Crows."

"Many years ago, a small wooden bowl with two tiny crows carved on it was removed from the Monastery of St. Paul; a monk had taken it, and without knowing what he had done, he had brought the

---

(75) Pococke, *op. cit.*, 128.

(76) Johann Georg, *op. cit.*, 24.

(77) Schweinfurth, *op. cit.*, 182.

(78) *I Kings* 17 : 4,6.

(79) Palladius, *op. cit.*, I, 201.

charm to the Antonian Monastery. As the monk, carrying the bowl, entered the gate of Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs, all the crows which had been living in the immediate vicinity of the monastery, left southwards and settled in and around the Dair Anbâ Bûlâ. The monks of Dair Anbâ Bûlâ were furious and demanded the immediate return of their protective charm. When the monks of Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs complied with the demand of their brethren, the crows left St. Paul's Monastery, except for two crows. Still to this day there are only two crows at Dair Anbâ Bûlâ. When these two crows have young ones, the offspring eventually turn out the parents who, in their turn, join the crows at St. Antony's."

This story illustrates well the aversion which the monks entertain with regard to these birds. It is true, that the crow being a scavenger, has been considered "unclean" in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. In the Old Testament we read that "they are an abomination : the eagle, the ossifrage and every raven after his kind." [80] In this connection, it is interesting to note that Anbâ Bûlâ's unclean raven has played a similar role in later Christian iconography and mythology as St. Antony's pig, which is considered just as degraded an animal. [81] One is inclined to think that later Christian traditions have associated these lowly animals with the Desert Saints in order to stress their deep humility. The more immediate reason for the monks' dislike of the crows, however, lies in the destructive nature of these birds.

The Dair Anbâ Bûlâ has altogether four churches of which three are situated in the ancient part of the monastery. The Church of St. Paul or the Cave Church is the spiritual centre of the monastery. The sanctuary was originally built into the rock-cave, where St. Paul used to live. It is here where the bodily remains of Anbâ Bûlâ are preserved. The walls of the church are covered with paintings which are, generally speaking, in better condition, though of inferior artistic quality than those of the Church of Anbâ Antûnîûs in the Monastery at Mount Clysma. This ancient sanctuary differs from those in the other desert monasteries in that it has only a few graffiti of travellers and visitors. Of interest, however, is an ancient Gothic handwriting of a certain Franz Sembacher who must have visited the monastery in the early Middle Ages. [82] Descending a few steps, one enters the "Dome of the Martyrs", which is decorated with the paintings of St. George, St. Victor, St. Theodore, St. Claudius, St. Theodore and St.

---

(80) *Leviticus* 11 : 15.

(81) *Leviticus* 11 : 7, *Luke* 15 : 15.

(82) Schweinfurth, *op. cit.*, 199.

Shalabi. The paintings on the east wall of the entrance represent the "Little Strangers" of Dair al-Barâmûs, St. Maximus and St. Domitius, and St. Arsenius, St. Agapius, St. Macarius, St. Samuel, and St. Apollo, while the paintings on the south wall portray St. Michael, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and St. Gabriel. Having entered the dark church, one faces to the east three haikals. The northern haikal is dedicated to the Twenty-four Elders of the Apocalypse, the central haikal to St. Antony and the southern haikal to St. Paul. The west wall of the church is covered with numerous paintings of which only some can be identified.[83] The figures furthest to the south represent the five Archangels:[84] Raphael,[85] Suriel,[86] Zaqiel,[87] Sarathiel,[88] the Angel of God according to *Daniel* III and Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego.[89] The new marble feretory of Anbâ Bûlâ stands at the south wall of the church. The Divine Liturgy is celebrated in this church during the months of January, February and March, and the three haikals are used during this season interchangeably.

Close to the Church of St. Paul, almost above it, is the Church of Abû Saifain which was constructed in the latter part of the 18th century. It is used, however, only once a year during the week prior to Lent. The church is of little interest, except for its beautiful haikal screen with inlaid mother of pearl and ivory. The icons in the church represent St. Dioscorus, St. Mercurius or Abû Saifain, St. Macarius, St. Cyril, St. Paul the Theban and St. Antony, and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

On the third floor of the qasr is the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It was impossible for me to gain entrance to the church, because, as the monks said : "The whole building is unsafe, and we cannot go there ourselves. Furthermore, the key is with our bishop in Bûsh."

The Church of St. Michael is the largest church within the monastery. Situated south-west of the Cave Church it serves as the main church for Divine Services. Fr. Jullien refers to it as the *église des*

---

(83) These paintings were studied by Mr. Whittemore. *Cf.* Johann Georg, *op. cit.*, 19, and Fedden, *op. cit.*, 54.

(84) Polotsky in *Le Muséon* XLIX, 236, gives the names of seven archangels: Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Suriel, Raguel, Asuel, Saraphuel. *The Holy Psalmodia* lists the following names : Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Suriel, Sedakiel, Sarathiel, Ananiel, *op. cit.*, 348-9.

(85) *Tobit* 3 : 17, 5 : 4,6.: 10, etc.

(86) *I Enoch* 6 : 7, 8 : 3.

(87) *I Enoch* 6 : 7.

(88) *III Baruch* or the Greek *Apocalypse of Baruch* 4 : 15.

(89) *Daniel* 3 : 15 f. *Ethiop. Synax.*, Takhshash 2, Budge II, 313.

moines, [90] and the Divine Liturgy is celebrated here from April to November. Johann Georg calls this church *die neue Kirche,* and he considers that it belongs to the 17th century. [91] On entering the church, one passes through the bell-tower situated just outside the main church. The Church of St. Michael has two sanctuaries, the northern haikal is dedicated to St. Michael and the southern haikal to St. John the Baptist. In the Church of St. Michael, or to be exact, in the south haikal, the Divine Liturgy is celebrated from April to September on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays. It is always with great pride that the monks point out the painting of the Blessed Virgin Mary which is attached to the choir-screen. The monks attribute this painting to St. Luke the Evangelist who painted it in or around the year 40 A.D. The haikal-screen decoration is rather original in so far as the customary twelve apostles appear in the robes of Coptic desert monks.

The northern haikal of the church, or the sanctuary of St. John the Baptist, is used from the middle of September until the middle of November. The outstanding icon which attracts one's attention is the icon of the head of St. John the Baptist on a charger [92] on a gold background. It dates from 1760 and was painted by Ibrâhîm an-Nâsikh. [93] The other icons are of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Mark the Evangelist, St. Paul the Theban and St. Antony, St. George, St. Stephen, and the Mystical Supper. [94] The floor of the church is covered with straw-mats, and the visitor is required to take off his shoes before entering the church. Apparently, there is no general rule to be followed in this respect. It is true, that any person entering the haikal of a Coptic Church has to remove his shoes and women are not permitted at all to enter the sanctuaries. As to entering churches, however, each monastery has its own customs and regulations to be followed.

The library is a small dusty room on the north side of the Church of St. Michael. There are approximately 500 volumes, and both manuscripts and printed books have been so stored away that one gets the impression that the library is used only on rare occasions. Johann Georg mentioned: "A library is no longer there." [95] I wonder

---

(90) Jullien, *op. cit.,* 65.

(91) Johann Georg, *op. cit.,* 21.

(92) *Matthew* 14 : 11.

(93) Ibrâhîm an-Nâsikh also painted the small icons that at one time were attached to the choir screen of the Lower Church of St. Mercurius in Old Cairo. Burmester, *A Guide to the Ancient Coptic Churches of Cairo,* 43.

(94) *i.e.* the Last Supper.

(95) Johann Georg, *op. cit.,* 18.

if the monks refused to show him the library. The monastic libraries have been exploited and robbed so frequently by bibliophiles and bibliomaniacs, that the monks have developed a certain sense of overprotectiveness with regard to their books. I experienced something similar at Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs.

There are altogether 32 cells in the monastery, of which 10 are unoccupied. As in the case of the Monastery of St. Antony, the Monastery of St. Paul gives the impression of being a small Egyptian village with its narrow streets and domestic animals. Incidentally, I noticed the following animals in the monastery : a horse, a donkey, ten goats and eight cats ! The horse is used in the mill and the donkey serves the monks as a means of transport.

The water at Dair Anbâ Bûlâ is supplied by two wells ; the "Spring of Anbâ Bûlâ", as the monks refer to it, is situated in the western part of the monastery. The water issuing from the mountain crevices, flows into a cemented reservoir tank, and is used for drinking and cooking purposes. A small drain leads the surplus water into a second reservoir which is used by the monks for washing purposes. A further drain carries off the water into a larger basin from where it is distributed for irrigation. The other spring is traditionally associated with Miriam, the musician, prophetess and sister of Moses and Aaron. During their exodus from Egypt, the Israelites were supposed to have halted in this vicinity, and Miriam is said to have bathed in the pool.[96] It is for this reason that the monks still refer to the spring as the "Pool of Miriam". It is situated about 300 feet south of the monastery, but nowadays the monks make little use of the pool.

At present, there are 22 monks at Dair Anbâ Bûlâ of whom twelve are hieromonks. The youngest monk is 25 years of age, while the oldest monk is 63. Apart from those living at the Red Sea monastery, fifteen monks are attached to the Dependency of Dair Anbâ Bûlâ at Bûsh in the Nile Valley. Nine monks serve as parish priests in churches throughout Egypt. The hegoumenos of the monastic community is Qummus Fîlîbûs al-Bûlî. Two of the monks have a good knowledge of English. Abûnâ Damîân al-Bûlî is a young monk of 27

---

(96) There is no Old Testament evidence that in the Exodus the Israelites went as far south as the South Qalâlah mountains. Coming from Succoth they would have crossed the "Reedy Sea" at Migdol (near the modern Suez), and proceeded from there to Marah, and further on to Mount Moses.

years of age and the son of a priest. He came originally from Sohâg, and has stayed for shorter periods in several monasteries including Dair Anbâ Samwîl at al-Qalamûn. He plans to leave the Red Sea monastery and to join the Dependency at Bûsh for a year, and then to serve as a parish priest. There is a regulation which requires monks to stay a minimum of two years in the Desert Monastery and one year in the Dependency before becoming eligible to serve as parish priests in the "world." The other monk is Abûnâ Armânîûs al-Bûlî, the only blue-eyed monk I have come across in all the Egyptian monasteries. Before entering the monastic life he used to be a jeweller in Alexandria. On account of a religious experience he joined the Monastery of al-Barâmûs in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. From there he changed over to the Monastery of St. Paul.

Abûnâ 'Abd an-Nûr al-Bûlî.

Abûnâ Risqallah al-Bûlî.

There are two semi-solitaries living in the monastery. Abûnâ Hinîn al-Bûlî and Abûnâ 'Abd an-Nûr al-Bûlî. The latter has his cell and little garden in the western part of the monastery. The little white building, not unlike that of Abûnâ Buqtur al-Antûnî, is covered with Arabic writing and a Coptic cross. Abûnâ 'Abd an-Nûr's main pride is his garden in which he plants grapes and a variety of vegetables and fruits. The monks say that Abûnâ Hinîn has not left his cell for seven years.

At the time of Pococke's visit to the monastery, the monks "were not allowed so much as to smoke in the convent, nor to eat meat, but the good monks think they do not break through their rule if they do both without the convent, which is what they commonly practice."[97] To-day, the monks smoke, and as regards the eating of meat in the monastery, I am quite certain, that also in this respect the traditional rules have been relaxed, that is to say, for the seasons when it is permitted to eat meat.

The age distribution of the monks at Dair Anbâ Bûlâ is quite promising in terms of the future of the monastery, and compares favourably with that of Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs. There are :

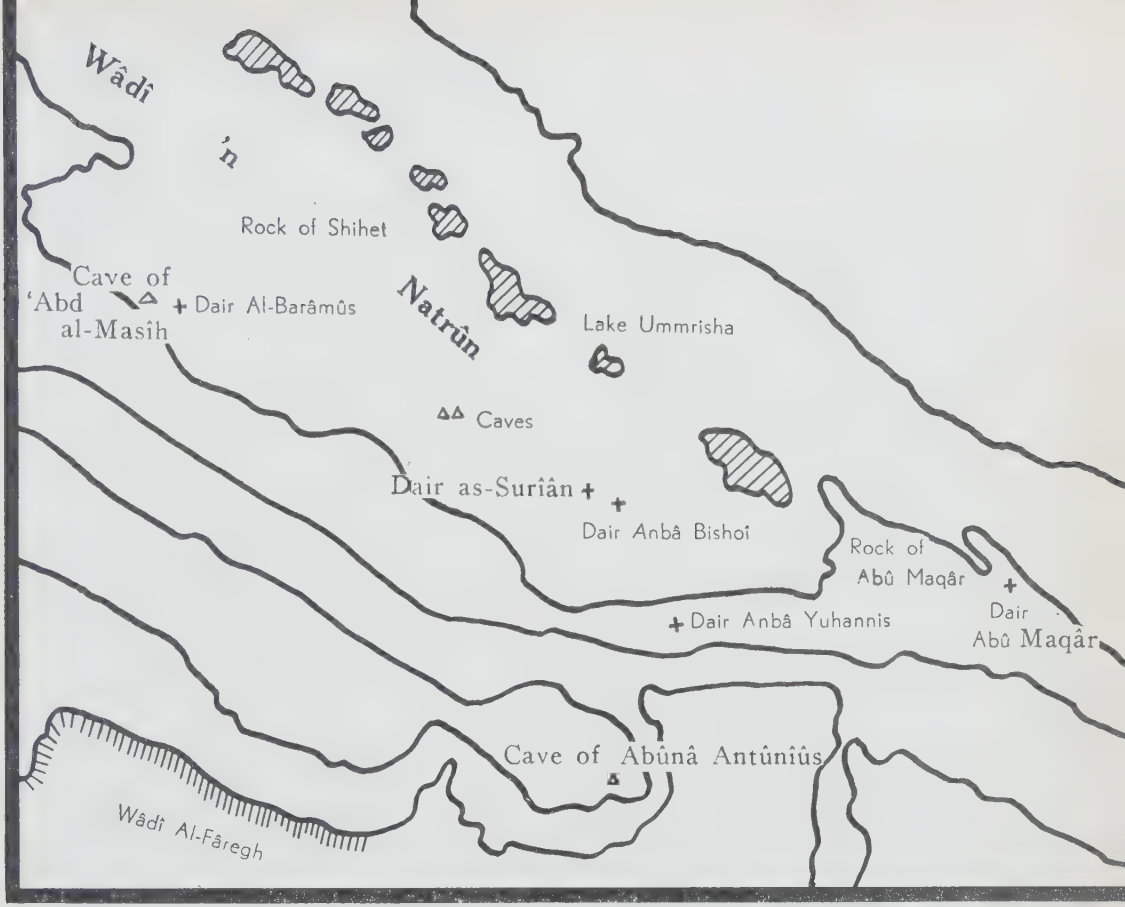
6 monks between 20 and 30 years of age,
8 monks between 30 and 40 years of age.
2 monks between 40 and 50 years of age,
4 monks between 50 and 60 years of age, and
2 monks between 60 and 70 years of age.

In many respects, the monastic life in Dair Anbâ Bûlâ appears to be more intimate, more consolidated and also more friendly than that in many other monasteries. The relative poverty of the monastery and its smallness are no doubt contributing factors. The "corporeal presence" of their Patron Saint may well serve as inspiration towards homogeneity. The original cave is "in" the monastery and not beyond the walls. This means that the monks of Dair Anbâ Bûlâ are not as "cave conscious" as the brethren of their sister monastery.

Yet, there are several caves in the vicinity of the monastery which at one time were inhabited. South of the monastery, between the "Pool of Miriam" and the south gate, is the cave of Abûnâ Buqtur al-Bûlî. According to Abûnâ Rizqallah al-Bûlî, Abûnâ Buqtur lived in this cave for 40 years, this was about one hundred years ago. The cave belongs to the simple one-room type with a large entrance facing to the south. Debris, straw and ashes lead one to conclude that, at present, it is used by the Bedouins who live around the monastery. About one kilometre south-west of the monastery in the Wâdî Umm Sillîma are three other caves, though none of them are inhabited by monks. As in the case of the cave of Abûnâ Buqtur, there is the same evidence here that these caves are used for shelter by the Bedouins. In order to visit the caves in the Wâdî Umm Sillîma, however, it is quite essential to employ the services of a monk.

---

(97) Pococke, *op. cit.*, 128.


Wâdî 'n Natrûn
Rock of Shihet
Cave of 'Abd al-Masîh
Dair Al-Barâmûs
Lake Ummrisha
Caves
Dair as-Suriân
Dair Anbâ Bishoî
Rock of Abû Maqâr
Dair Abû Maqâr
Dair Anbâ Yuhannis
Cave of Abûnâ Antûnîûs
Wâdî Al-Fâregh

Map of Wâdî 'n-Natrûn

The Valley of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn

THE Wâdî 'n-Natrûn[1] has a long history dating from Pharaonic times. Caravans travelled from the Buhairah and Farâfrah Oases to the Nile Delta, passing the small oasis of Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. Today the caravan route is frequently used by the Ghawabis and Awlâd 'Alî tribes to transport the dates and olives of Buhairah to the Delta.

In the famous group of papyri known as "The Complaints of the Peasant", evidence is produced that in the early Middle Kingdom[2] some of the products of Farâfrah Oasis were taken by way of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn to be sold at Heracleopolis. Recent discoveries of a black granite bust of a chancellor of the XVIIth Dynasty of Lower Egypt,[3] a granite gateway, blocks from a lintel and jambs with cartouches of

---

(1) Wâdî means valley, gulley, river-bed, where water flows only when it rains.

(2) 2000-1785 B.C.

(3) Porter, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts,* VII, 317.

Amenemhet I,[4] at Quarat ad-Dahr, and other remains, lead us to suppose that even in the year 2000 B.C. this region was considered sacred. The site in question is only 5 km. north-west of the Monastery of St. Macarius (Abû Maqâr).[5]

Found in the four monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, and among the ruins of the ancient monasteries, are many blocks of granite and drums of large columns. These granite blocks have, in all probability, come from an ancient temple, and there is no place in the whole region other than Quarat ad-Dahr, from where they could have been taken.[6]

According to Coptic tradition, the Desert of Scetis or the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn has a Christian history going as far back as the visit of the Holy Family to Egypt. We read in the *Synaxarium* that, after visiting Basâtah and Munyat Samanûd, they crossed the river to the west bank and then saw from afar the Gabel 'n-Natrûn. The Blessed Virgin Mary blessed it, knowing the effects of angelic services that would be rendered there.[7] Furthermore, it is alleged that some Christians escaped to the Desert of Scetis during the Diocletian persecution which began in 304 A.D. and lasted in the East till 311 A.D.

Evelyn White, in his monumental work, *The Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn,* devotes a whole chapter to the perplexing problem of topography with regard to the ancient monastic settlements in the Western desert. Three localities west of the Nile Delta are frequently referred to by the early monastic Fathers. For example, we hear that Macarius the Alexandrian, in the latter part of the fourth century, had four cells in the Western desert.[8] "One in Scete, the inner desert, one in Lybia, one in the "Cells", and one in Mount Nitria. Two of these were without windows, and in them he used to dwell in darkness during the Forty Days' Fast, another was so narrow that he could not stretch out

---

(4) The founder of the 12th Dynasty was Amenemhet (ca. 2000-1970 B.C.). It was a period of peace and order as well as a renaissance of architecture and masterly productions in the minor arts. When he reorganized Egypt he started a policy for defending his western frontier, and built a fortress at the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn for this purpose. Fakhry, *Siwa Oasis,* 24.

(5) Ancient hieroglyphic inscriptions in the temple of Edfu, reproduced by Dümichen, mention a district referred to as sechet-hemam (das Salzfeld), which is identified with the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. The capital of this region, Schorp, was famous for the production of the much desired salt. *Cf.* Dümichen, *Die Oasen der Libyschen Wüste,* 29 ; Falls, *Three Years in the Libyan Desert,* 66.

(6) Fakhry, "Waḍi al-Natrûn", 839 f.

(7) Synax., *Patr. Orient.,* XVI, 409.

(8) Evelyn White, *The Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn,* II, 17-42.

his legs, but another, wherein he used to receive the brethren was wide and spacious."[9] The Mount of Nitria, a place where nitrate was found, was situated about 40-50 km. north of the present Cairo-Alexandria route Rest House, or some 14 km. south-west of Damanhûr.

One of the earliest references to this locality is made by the Greek geographer Strabo (born 63 B.C.) who in 25-24 B.C. accompanied the prefect of Egypt, Aelius Gallus, on his expedition to Upper Egypt. In his seventeenth book, Strabo says: "Above Momemphis are two nitre-beds, which contain very large quantities of nitre, and the Nitriote Nome. Here Serapis is held in honour and they are the only people who sacrifice a sheep."[10] It is quite likely, therefore, that Strabo referred to the Desert of Scetis and the Mount of Nitria.

Though still in the desert, the mountain was situated on the edge of the Delta. It is a mistake, therefore, to identify the present Wâdî 'n-Natrûn with the Mount of Nitria.[11] It is in the latter locality that we find the earliest home of Christian asceticism. Palladius, who visited the monks living in Nitria in 391 A.D., offers the following description: "Now having held converse with many of the Saints, and having gone around about among the monasteries which were nigh unto Alexandria for three years, and having met about 2,000 of the great and strenuous men who lived there, and who were adorned with the excellence of spiritual lives, I departed from there and came to Mount Nitria. Now between this mountain and Alexandria there lieth a certain lake which is called "Mareotis" .... Now in this mountain there are seven bakers who make bread and who minister unto them, and unto the chosen men of the inner desert, of whom there are six hundred, and also unto the people of that mountain."[12] From this account it is evident that some primitive form of communal fellowship existed among the monks of the Mount of Nitria.

---

[9] Palladius, *The Paradise or Garden of the Holy Fathers...* I, 120.

[10] Strabo, Book XVII, i, 23. A geographical study of the area was undertaken in 1915. At that time, the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn and the desert intervening between it and Cairo were covered by a carefully executed triangulation of about 160 points. The net was directly connected with the main triangulation of the Nile Valley, and the levels of all the points were found trigonometrically, using the top of the Great Pyramid of Giza as starting point. The study was executed by Dr. John Ball and Mr. O.H Little. *Cf.* Ball, *Notes on Recent Determinations of Geographical Positions in the Libyan Desert*, 2.

[11] "After this he (Palladius) departed to Mount Nitria, that is to say, to the district commonly called "Wâdî 'n-Natrûn", the Nile Valley, or Birkat an-Natrûn, "the Nitre Lake", which is situated between 30° and 31° northern latitude, about two days' journey from the Rosetta arm of the Nile. Palladius, *op. cit.*, I, xvj.

[12] Palladius, *op. cit.*, I, 99.

The second settlement frequently referred to by the ancient authorities, was called Cellia, situated south-west of the Mount of Nitria on the way to Scetis, the present Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. According to Palladius, this was the habitation of Macarius the Alexandrian. "He was an elder in the place which is called the "Cells", wherein I myself lived for nine years." [13] Another well known monk who lived in Cellia was Isaac of Cellia who is commemorated by the Coptic Church on the 19th of Bashons. [14] Many monks must have inhabited this region and some form of hegemonic system must have been observed as the following quotation shows. "And when they (the monks) had come out to go to the Cells, the honorable men fell down before the priest of the Cells, and said unto him, 'Father, give our brothers orders to take us to see all the fathers'." Furthermore, we hear of the Blessed Evagrius, who, after living two years in Nitria dwelt for 14 years in the place called "the Cells", and he lived on one pound of bread a day, and a box of oil every three months. [15]

The locality which will mainly concern us has been known by a number of names: Scetis, Scythis, Al-Askît, Scitium, Shiet, Shihet, Wâdî Habîb, and Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. [16] Its distance from Cellia was a journey of about 60 km. and from the Mount of Nitria about 75 km. [17] While both the Mount of Nitria and Cellia had been visited by monks and others, there is no indication that Scetis was ever inhabited until the day when St. Macarius ventured there to find the quietness that he had missed elsewhere. This, then, was the area that became eventually the centre of Coptic monasticism, the region into which the great Saints of the Egyptian Church withdrew. St. Macarius the Great, St. Pshoi, St. John the Short, St. John Kame, and many others. Here we find the "Little Strangers", Maximus and Domitius of the Monastery of the Romans (Dair al-Barâmûs), and Moses the Black, who being attracted by the Saints of Scetis, decided to remain in the desert and to follow the ascetic life. Evelyn White, after listing the historical and geographical arguments, finally comes to the conclusion that the ancient Scetis can only

---

(13) *Ibid.*, 117.

(14) Synax., *Pat. Orient.*, XVI, 296-7.

(15) Palladius, *op. cit.*, I, 225.

(16) Scetis is not derived from the Greek "asketes" as it is sometimes supposed. Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 27. Quatremère, *Mémoires Géographiques et Historiques*, I, 451 ff. Spiegelberg calls "Sketis" the "Nord-Oase", the northern Oasis. *Kopt. Handwörterbuch*, 250.

(17) Evelyn White, *op.cit.*, II, 31.

be identified with the settlement founded by St. Macarius the Great in the vicinity of Dair al-Barâmûs.[18] This settlement, more remote than either the Mount of Nitria or Cellia, became in later years one of the foremost centres of Egyptian monasticism. Its relative isolation preserved it as a place for contemplation and refuge.

It was to this haven of the desert also that Porphyry, the Bishop of Gaza, went. For we read in his *Vita*, that after taking the ship from the city of the Thessalonians he came to Egypt, and straightway went to Scetis. And when he had sojourned there with the holy fathers for the space of five years, there entered into him another divine desire and he departed into the parts about Jordan.[19]

It is interesting to note that the glory of the Mount of Nitria passed away after the fifth century, what we know of its previous existence comes to us through the reports of visitors. The two pairs, Rufinus and Melania,[20] and St. Jerome and Paula,[21] are said to have visited the Mount of Nitria, and their testimonies give us an insight into the ascetic lives of the fathers in that region. To them this settlement on the edge of the desert was more easily accessible, which explains its contact with the "world". Yet this very proximity to the "world" was the reason why it was abandoned. A similar fate befell the community of the Cells. Only the most remote and isolated community survived the internal and external pressures exerted upon the monastic fellowships. The Desert of Scetis or Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, because of its isolation, became for many years the bulwark of Coptic monasticism, for a very long time even the residence of the Coptic Patriarch.

The Wâdî 'n-Natrûn is about 22 miles long, and runs in a north-westerly direction, its south-eastern end being forty miles north-west of Cairo. The valley is never more than five miles wide; the low undulating hills running on each side of it are covered with silicious pebbles and a few very stunted bushy plants. These hills slope down to the sandy valley, the lowest point of which is 70 to 80 feet below the level of the sea at Alexandria. In this valley there are about eight lakes lying in a line from one end of the Wâdî to the other. All the lakes are salt, containing in solution varying quantities of chloride and carbonate of soda, and sometimes some sodium sulphate. The sand for some distance round the lakes, and even as far south as Dair Abû Maqâr, is covered with a thick outgrowth of salt. The lakes dry up in the summer, some of them becoming completely dry, while others re-

---

(18) *Ibid.*, 34.

(19) *The Life of Porphyry*, 7.

(20) Palladius. *op. cit.*, I, 156.

(21) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 86-7.

main moist, though hardly wet, marshes. The large deposits of salt give the country a very wintry aspect, the appearance, in fact, suggests a heavy fall of snow. This illusion, however, is rapidly dispelled by the quantities of mosquitoes which frequent the vicinity of the lakes.[22]

For centuries, the monasteries in the Desert of Scetis could enjoy the isolation that the desert provided. The building of the Cairo-Alexandria desert road in 1936, the construction of the Rest House with its General Motors Beacon at Wâdî 'n-Natrûn have helped to destroy the cherished isolation of the monasteries. With this encroachment of the "world" on the Desert of Scetis one may well ask, whether the eremitical manner of life in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn may not suffer the same fate as the eremitical settlement in Nitria and Cellia. To the desert fellowship, the "world" is death, and the "world" penetrates rapidly and unceasingly into the desert. Some of the monks most affected by the worldly penetration have preferred to leave the ancient Desert of Scetis for the Desert of al-Qalamûn, others have left the monasteries to return to the original anchorite life, living in caves in the vicinity of Dair as-Surîân and Dair al-Barâmûs.

The object of the following discussion on the four Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn is merely to present some of the more important highlights in the long history of these monasteries. For a detailed study of the history of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn Monasteries the reader should consult the volumes by Hugh Evelyn White,[23] the *History of the Patriarchs* by Sâwîrûs ibn al-Muqaffa[24] and the *Jacobite Synaxarium*.[25] In this study I am greatly indebted to the findings of Evelyn White. However, here and there, a number of corrections and additions have been made, where they were required.

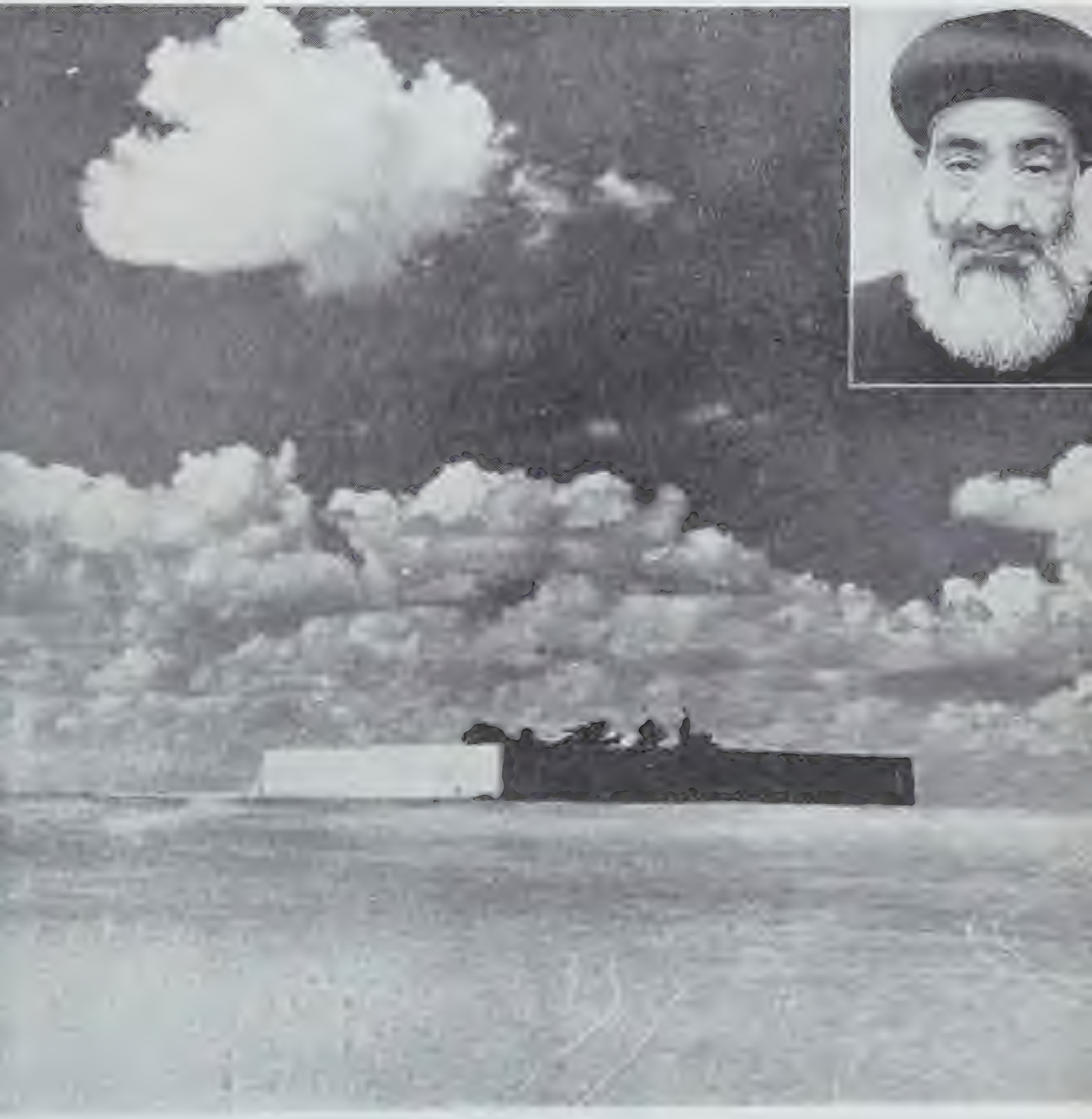
---

(22) De Winton, "List of Mammals obtained by the Hon. N. Charles Rothshild and the Hon. R. Henley in the Natron Valley," 279-81. For some excellent pictures of the desert, *cf.* Stocker, *Das Wadi Natrun,* Vegetationsbilder, 18. Reihe.

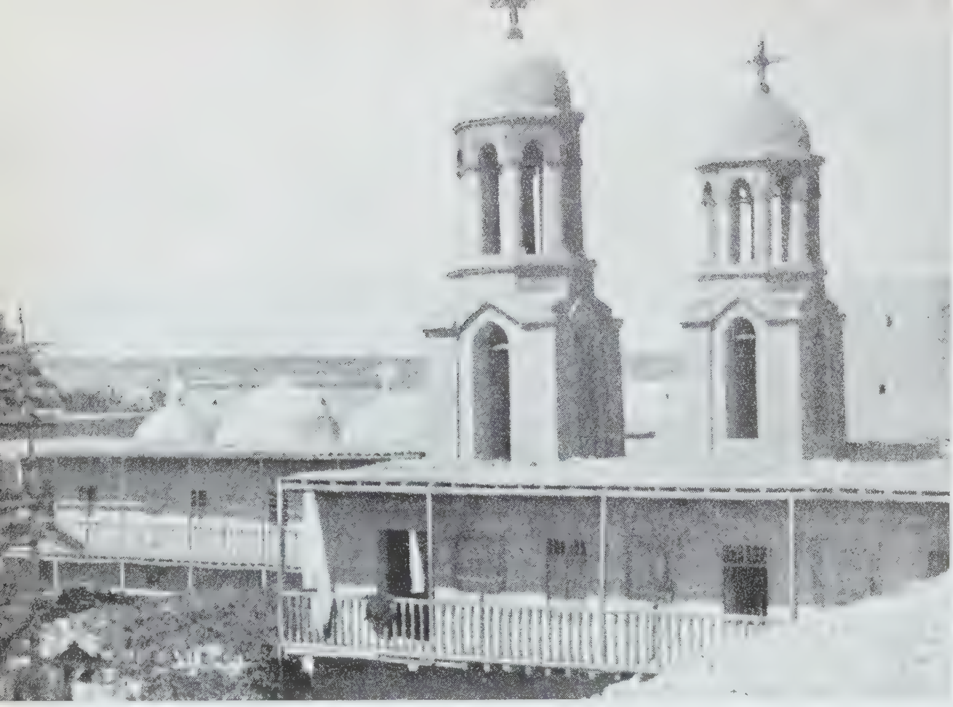
(23) Evelyn White, *The Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn,* II, III.

(24) The History of the Patriarchs. see *Patr. Orient.*, I, V, X, and the continuation under the title *Hist. Patr. of the Egyptian Church*, Vol. II, i, ii, iii, respectively Cairo 1943, 1948, 1959.

(25) Synaxaire Arabe Jacobite, *cf. Patr. Orient.*, I, III, XI, XVI, XVII.

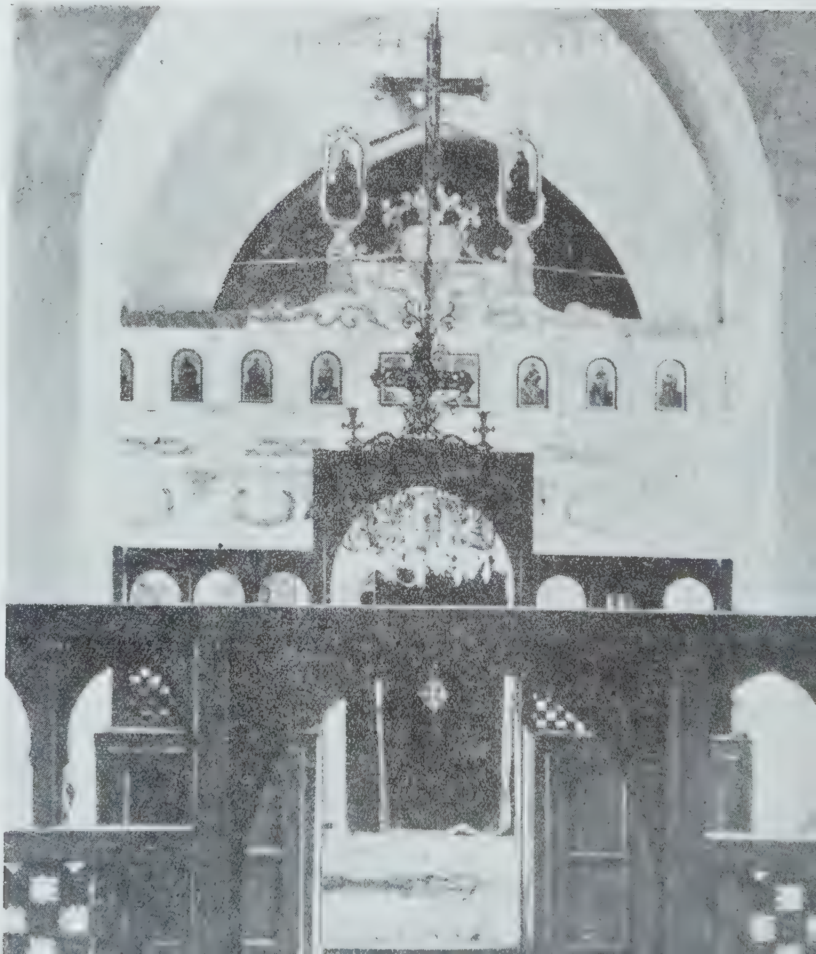


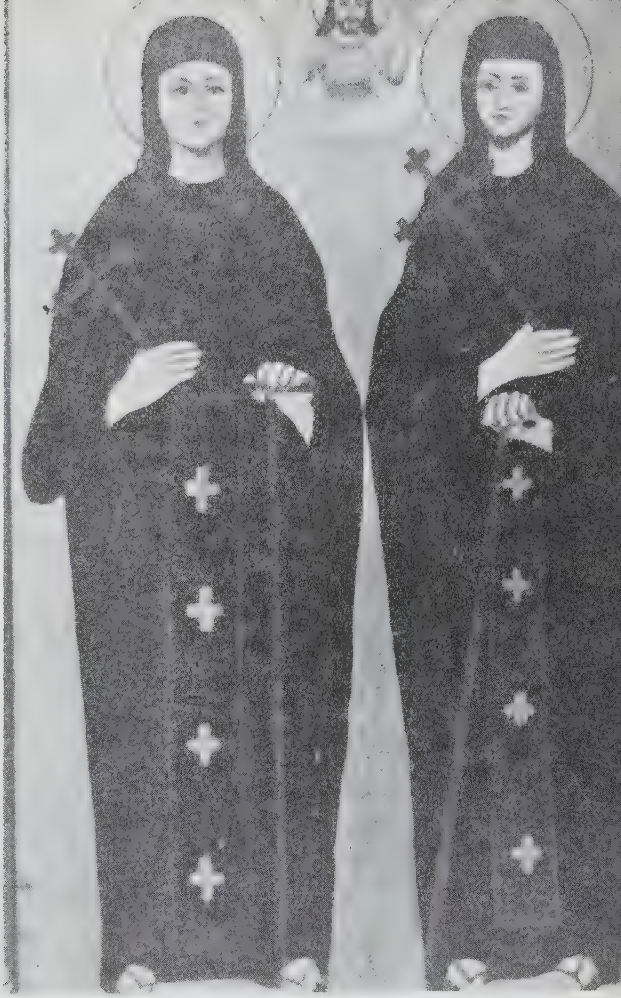
DAIR AL-BARAMUS
Inset, Anbâ Makârîûs, Bishop of the Monastery.



Bell-towers, cells, and domes of the Church of al-'Adhrâ.

Church of St. John the Baptist. Background, Iconostasis; foreground, choir and nave screens.





The "Little Strangers."
Left : St. Domitius.
Right : St. Maximus.

Dair al-Barâmûs

1. The Foundation of the Monastery

THE earliest settlement in the Desert of Scetis is the Monastery of the Romans commonly called al-Barâmûs.[1] This is testified by Serapion in his *Vita* of St. Macarius.[2] The history of its foundation is intimately related to the lives of the two Roman Saints, Maximus and Domitius.[3] According to tradition, these two young Roman princes, sons of the Roman emperor Valentinian,[4] arrived in Scetis, after having

---

(1) Barâmûs comes from the Coptic Parômaios = belonging to the Romans.

(2) Amélineau, *Histoire des Monastères de la Basse-Egypte, vies des Paul, Antoine, Maxime et Domèce, Jean le Nain*, 48 ff.

(3) Amélineau, *op. cit.*, 262 f.

(4) Valentinian I, Roman Emperor of the West from 364-375 A.D. had been an officer under Jovian, and had risen to a high position in the imperial services. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, II, 115.

visited the Christian shrines of Nicaea and Palestine. Here, they met St. Macarius, who served as the priest of the desert.

Palladius, who tells of their experience with St. Macarius, does not mention the names of the two princes, though there is no doubt as to the identity of the two young men.[5] At first, feeling that they were too weak and feeble for the rough desert life, St. Macarius tried to dissuade them. After a while, however, the two "Little Strangers" had established themselves in their cell, and it was said that the older brother had attained to perfection before he died. Three days later, the younger brother also died, "and whensoever the fathers came to Anbâ Maqârîûs, he used to take them to the cell of those two brethren, and say unto them: 'Behold ye the martyrdom of these Little Strangers'."

A year after their death, St. Macarius consecrated the cell of the princes and said: "Call this place the Cell of the Romans."[6] Whether Maximus and Domitius were real characters or whether they were merely legendary figures is a matter of controversy.

It is quite likely that the earliest monastic community in the vicinity of the present location of Dair al-Barâmûs existed in 340 A.D. St. Macarius the Egyptian, who had been a disciple of St. Antony the Great, had died only recently, when Palladius visited the Desert of Scetis in 391 A.D.,[7] and we are informed that the Saint was 30 years of age when he entered the inner desert, which may have taken place around 330 A.D. As in the case of St. Antony, others admiring and imitating St. Macarius gathered around him and thus formed the first monastic community in Scetis.

Thus, St. Antony served as an inspiration to St. Macarius. Furthermore, it is quite plausible to assume that St. Antony may have urged St. Macarius to be ordained to the priesthood so as to be able to cele-

---

(5) Palladius, *The Paradise or Garden of the Holy Fathers...* I, 240-242. In this connection it is interesting to note that the monks of Scetis knew of two Roman princes, Arcadius and Honorius, sons of the Roman emperor Theodosius who were taught by Anbâ Arsânîûs. Arsenius is belived to have come to Scetis in 394 A.D. Could it be possible that some confusion with this story accounts for the royal element in the tradition of the "Little Strangers"? For by the 15th century, Anbâ Arsânîûs is reported to have been the teacher of Maximus and Domitius, and not of Arcadius and Honorius. "Maximus and Timotheus waren die Söhne eines griechischen Kaisers und hatten den Arsenius zum Lehrer..." See O'Leary, *The Saints of Egypt*, 193; Wüstenfeld, *Maqrîzi's Geschichte der Copten*, 112.

(6) Amélineau, *op. cit.*, 312.

(7) Palladius, *op. cit.*, I, 113, 240, 271, 273.

brate the Divine Liturgy in the Desert of Scetis. As mentioned above, the date of the first settlement, that is, the building of a church with some cells scattered around it, may well have been about 340 A.D., for at the time of the death of St. Antony in 356 A.D., the community of Scetis was well established.[8]

2. Heresies and Destructions

The subsequent history of the monastic communities in the Desert of Scetis[9] shows all the internal and external difficulties that any institution might have to undergo. Internally, a variety of doctrinal developments threatened the spiritual harmony of the desert experience. Even during the days of St. Macarius there were heterodox tendencies as in the case of Hierax, a monk who asserted that marriage was of the devil and that there was no resurrection of the body, but only that of the spirit.[10] Other doctrinal developments and controversies were even of a more lasting nature. The Origenist heresy troubled the Fathers of Scetis, since the views of Origen were studied[11] and even accepted by some of the monks at the Mount of Nitria and in Cellia.[12] Another heresy, that of the anthropomorphites, made an even greater impression upon many of the illiterate monks. Their doctrine asserted, in contradiction to Origen's views, that "the sacred Scripture testifies that God has eyes, ears, hands, and feet, as men have."[13] Though denounced by an episcopal letter of Theophilus, the doctrines of the anthropomorphites were not extinguished. Evelyn White even believes that the anthropomorphite heresy was so widespread that "the anthropomorphists

---

(8) Amélineau, *op. cit.*, 315.

(9) By the end of the fourth century, four fairly independent communities existed in the Desert of Scetis. The community of the Romans (Barâmûs), the community of St. Macarius, the community of St. John the Short (Yuhannis Colobus), and the community of St. Pshoi.

(10) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 115-117.

(11) In the *History of the Blessed Man Ammonius* it is recorded that he could repeat the books of the Old Testament and New Testament by heart, and he also used to read the books by Origen. Palladius, *op. cit.*, I, 105.

(12) The most influential leader of the Origenist party was the monk Isidorus. Palladius, *op. cit.*, I, 89. Bishop Theophilus of Alexandria addressed the monks of the Western Desert : "If you really admit that God's countenance is such as ours, anathematize Origen's books, for some have drawn arguments from them in contrariety to our opinion." Socrates, *The Ecclesiastical History*, 311.

(13) Socrates, *op. cit.*, 313. "The Anthropomorphists, who swarmed among the monks of Egypt and the Catholics of Africa, could produce the express declaration of Scripture, that man was made after the image of his creator." Gibbon, *op. cit.*, III, 322.

appear to have outnumbered the liberal party by at least three to one."[14]

Internally weakened by heterodoxy and heresy, the monks faced an even greater danger from the Barbarians. These hordes were Berber tribes, who invaded the Desert of Scetis, either from the al-Khargah—Dâkhla oases or from the Oasis of Sîwah. St. Macarius had warned his disciples of the future fate of their communities. He prophesied the devastation of Scetis, saying "that when you see the cells growing in numbers in the valley and when you see trees growing by the gate, when you see numerous children, then take your hide[15] and flee. . . . and it shall be so until the first destruction of Scetis after forty years, because they shall have satisfied their passions. Then again, Christ the King will have pity on them, He will let them return a second time and He will give them these laws and commandments. And they will obey, performing half of the commandments, and this will be until the second destruction of Scetis, because of the grandeur of their luxury. And again Christ the King will let them return for the third time and will give them also these laws and these commandments..."[16]

With the gradual institutionalization of the communities of Scetis, the monks were tempted to compromise and fall into laxity, which by their founders was considered the most pernicious sin. The Coptic *collegia pietatis* was confronted with the "world" within its own walls. Thus, the very purpose of the ascetic ideal was threatened and naturally, according to traditional Biblical theology, God was expected to intervene and to punish the offenders. This, according to the Old Testament, God had done before in the case of the Hebrews by using the Babylonians to destroy their capital only to permit them to return under different religious conditions.[17]

The first destruction of Scetis, no doubt involving all four monastic communities,[18] may well have been in the beginning of the fifth century, that is prior to 408 A.D. The ecclesiastical historian, Philostorgius, reports "that at the time of the Emperor Arcadius (378-408 A.D.) the Mazices and Auzorians, who dwell between Africa and Libya,

---

(14) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 133-34.

(15) The hide or sheepskin or melotes was only worn by the monks when travelling, but laid aside in the cell, and consequently the phrase "to take up the melotes" was synonymous with "to depart." Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 196.

(16) Amélineau, *op. cit.*, 133-137.

(17) We see here the classical prototype of "withdrawal" and "return" reenacted in the history of the monastic societies of Scetis. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 217 f.

(18) Dair al-Barâmûs, Dair Abû Maqâr, Dair Anbâ Bishoî, and Dair Yuhannis Colobus.

flocking in from the eastern parts, devastated Libya, and at the same time overran a considerable portion of Egypt." [19] One of the first martyrs of the Berber invasion was Anbâ Mûsâ the Indian, a Captain of Thieves, as he is referred to by Palladius. [20] An Ethiopian, who because of insubordination was compelled to leave his country, he became a robber, even a murderer. [21] After hearing of the ascetes in the Western Desert, he decided to join them. He met St. Isidore and St. Macarius and lived a highly ascetic life in spite of constant temptations. Later, he was ordained to the priesthood. In some way he knew before hand of a possible raid by the Mazices, and he warned his disciples, who were seventy in number, advising those who wished to escape to do so. [22] He remained with seven other monks at the community of al-Barâmûs expecting martyrdom, so that the saying might be fulfilled that "all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword." [23] The manner of death of Anbâ Mûsâ is not mentioned by Palladius, which leads one to suppose that the first destruction of Scetis took place after Palladius had visited the Desert of Scetis.[24] Two of the monks who escaped the slaughter of the Berbers were to become the founders of the "central" monastic communities, Anbâ Yuhannis Colobus and Anbâ Bishoî. [25]

Only three or four years after the first devastation of the monastic communities, a second raid by the Berbers took place. This event is attested by a saying of Anbâ Arsânîûs who had remained in Scetis during the first destruction of the monasteries. Arsânîûs is quoted as saying: "The world has ruined Rome and the monks of Scetis." [26] This, then, is the one and only reference that places the second sack of the monasteries in the year 410 A.D. [27] Nothing really is known about the

---

(19) Philostorgius, *The Ecclesiastical History*, 511. The invading barbarians are frequently referred to as the Mazices. For a documented description of the identity of these people, *cf.* Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 151. Palladius mentions the mountain of the Mazaki and of the Mauretanians which is inhabited by excellent men. Palladius, *op. cit.*, I, 99.

(20) Palladius, *op. cit.*, I, 215.

(21) Palladius mentions his wickedness "in order that I may show forth the beauty of his repentance," Palladius, *loc. cit.*

(22) O'Leary, *op. cit.*, 207.

(23) *Matthew* 26 : 52.

(24) For a description of the life of the Saint, see Synax., *Patr., Orient.*, XVIII, 591-594.

(25) *Cf.* chap. Dair Anbâ Bishoî.

(26) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 162.

(27) As in the case of the monasteries, barbarians (though of Teutonic origin) besieged Rome in 410 A.D. After having deposed Attalus Augustus, Alaric marched to the siege and sack of Rome.

loss of lives or damage done to the buildings. There is good reason to believe, that if destroyed, the monasteries were rapidly rebuilt and reinhabited.

A third sack took place in 444 A.D. at which occurred the martyrdom of the Forty-nine Martyrs of Scetis who are associated with the Monastery of St. Macarius.[28]

After the three devastations in the fifth century, the monasteries of Scetis recuperated and apparently regained some prosperity. It is reported that after the patriarchate of Anbâ Butrus IV (567-569 A.D.) the monasteries enjoyed peace and productivity. "This was at the time of the rebuilding of the four monasteries in Wâdî Habîb, which were growing up like the plants of the field in security and guidance from God; and to their inhabitants was brought all that they needed, and they worked industriously at the building."[29] Yet, theological arguments and debates must have preoccupied the monks for the *History of the Patriarchs* tells of a group of monks referred to as Meletians[30] who used to receive the communion chalice many times in the night before they came to church. This was during the patriarchate of Anbâ Damîân (569-605 A.D.), who ordered that the Meletians should be banished.[31]

But the patriarchate of Anbâ Damîân was troubled again by an even more disasterous event than heretical doctrines. The Barbarians invaded the Desert of Scetis for the fourth time. The story goes that during the patriarchate of Damîân "a voice came from heaven upon that desert, saying : 'Flee ! Flee !' and when the inhabitants of the four monasteries had left them, they were laid waste. When news of this reached the Patriarch Damîân, he was exceedingly sad."[32]

In all of these sacks it is highly probable that many, if not all, of the monastic buildings were wrecked, the churches plundered, and many of the monks either slain or carried off as captives. Since the fourth raid upon the monasteries of Scetis is reported to have occurred in the beginning of the reign of Anbâ Damîân, it might be logical to assume a date for the fourth destruction around 570-573 A.D.[33] The vacancy of the monasteries, however, could not have lasted very long. Probably by the beginning of the seventh century the monks had returned to rebuild their devastated communities. When the Patriarch

---

(28) *Cf.* p. 164.

(29) Hist. Patr., *Patr. Orient.*, I, 473.

(30) Meletius of Lycopolis (4th century) was a contemporary of Peter I of Alexandria. He suffered during the Diocletian persecution.

(31) Hist. Patr., *Patr. Orient.*, I, 473.

(32) Hist. Patr., *loc. cit.*

(33) *Ibid.*

Anbâ Banîâmîn I (622-661 A.D.) was called upon to consecrate the new church of Dair Abû Maqâr, he is said to have stopped at the Monastery of al-Barâmûs for one day,[34] before continuing his journey to his destination.

The patriarchate of Anbâ Alâksandarûs II (Alexander) (704-729 A.D.) was a period of great hardship for the monks of the Coptic Church. ʻAbd al-ʻAzîz Ibn Marwân, the Amir of Egypt, ordered a census of the monks. After it was taken he levied a tax of one dinar on each one, the first tribute ever taken from monks. His successors oppressed the Christians even more. This was especially true in the case of ʻAbd Allah Ibn ʻAbd al-Malik ibn Marwân and ʻUbaid Allah Ibn al-Hagîb, a commissioner of revenue who added a tax of one qirat to every dinar on the Copts.[35] "Then again, Usama Ibn Zaid at-Tanukhî, commissioner of revenues, oppressed the Christians still more, for he fell upon them, robbed them of their possessions, and branded with an iron ring the name of every monk on the monk's own hand, and the name of his convent, as well as his number; and whosoever of them was found without this brand, had his hand cut off . . . He then attacked the convents, where he found a number of monks without the brand on their hands, of whom he beheaded some, and others he beat so long that they died under the lash. He then pulled down the churches, broke the crosses, rubbed off the pictures, broke up all the images."[36]

Though the suffering of the Christians in Alexandria and Cairo continued, there is no evidence that the desert monasteries felt a similar strain, and it is quite likely that a temporary calm prevailed.

The peace of the desert was not to last. During the patriarchate of Anbâ Murqus II (799-819 A.D.), the monasteries were devastated for the fifth time. "The Arabs plundered it, and took the monks captive, and demolished the churches and the cells there. And the holy seniors were scattered in every part of the world, ...the joy of Egypt had ceased, and Wâdî Habîb, the Holy of the Holies, has become a ruin, the dwelling of wild beasts. The homes of our blessed fathers, who passed their nights in prayer, have become the resort of the owl and the dens of cruel foxes, namely this foul tribe."[37] That this event occurred before 819 A.D. is attested by the *History of the Patriarchs,*

---

(34) Hist. Patr., *Patr. Orient.*, I, 506. "Then we turned to the Monastery of al-Barâmûs, or Maximus and Domitius, where we alighted at the Church of the Holy Isidore, and we abode there one day."

(35) Malan, *A short history of the Copts by Maqrîzî*, 76.

(36) *Ibid.*, 77.

(37) Hist. Patr., *Patr.*, *Orient.*, X, 436-9.

which says, under the title of James, the fiftieth patriarch (819-830 A.D.), that "before the decease of the holy father, Anbâ Murqus, the holy desert of Wâdî Habîb had been laid waste.... in consequence of this slaughter, the monks were dispersed among cities and villages and monasteries, in the various provinces of Egypt and the two Thebaids. Thus none was left in the cells of Wâdî Habîb save a few persons who chose death." [38] Maqrîzî refers to the same instance but adds that it was part of a general persecution of the Copts. "At the time of Anbâ Murqus the younger, that is the 49th patriarch (799-819 A.D.), there was a fight between al-Amîn and Ma'mûn, then the Christians in Alexandria were pillaged and many of their homes were burnt. Also the monasteries of the Wâdî Habîb were burnt and pillaged, so that only a few monks remained there." [39]

The Monastery of al-Barâmûs shared with the other monasteries of the Desert of Scetis in the reconstruction and building programme during the patriarchates of Anbâ Ya'qûb (Jacob) (819-830 A.D.) and Anbâ Yûsâb (Joseph) (830-849 A.D.).[40] At the time of Anbâ Ya'qûb, a certain bishop named John was ordained for the land of Abyssinia. But when the king of Abyssinia went forth to war, they drove away the bishop, thus breaking the canon. Thereupon, John returned to Egypt and stayed at the Monastery of al-Barâmûs because he had first become a monk there. After the war, the king requested the return of the bishop, and he left the monastery to go back to Abyssinia.[41] This means that the reconstruction had progressed so far as to enable monks to live there.

The sixth sack of the monasteries of Scetis occurred during the patriarchate of Anbâ Shanûdah I (859-881 A.D.). "It was in the eighth year of the patriarchate of this father, and the days of the Holy Fast (Lent) drew near, and he desired to journey to the Holy Desert in the Wâdî Habîb to accomplish the Fast and the Holy Feast of Easter. Some of the faithful counselled him not to go for fear of the marauding Arabs, for it was the time when they came down from the land of Upper Egypt to the land of Lower Egypt, after putting their beasts to grass, lest something should befall him through them... Now the Arabs knew the time when the strangers assembled there... and they took possession of the church of the father Macarius and of the fortifications and carried off all the furniture and the food and other things which were in

---

(38) *Ibid.*, 440-1.

(39) Wüstenfeld, *op. cit.*, 58-9.

(40) *Cf.* p. 173.

(41) Hist. Patr., *Patr., Orient.*, X. 508-10.

them. On the first day of Baramûdah (it was the 27th of March, 866 A.D.) the Arabs made the round of all the monasteries and robbed all those who were in them and the people who came to them, and they drove most of them out at the point of the sword." [42] The courage of Anbâ Shanûdah inspired the monks and in spite of the real danger to life some monks remained in their monasteries and the patriarch conducted the Easter service at Dair Abû Maqâr.[43]

That the situation of the monasteries remained rather precarious is evident from the *History of the Patriarchs.* In Alexandria, there lived a certain Madalgah and with him "there were many people of his warrior friends who were known for their courage.[44] When their power had grown strong, they took possession of the lands and all the property of the Church of the Martyr Abû Mînâ at Maryût, and likewise, the property of the Church of St. Macarius and they pillaged them all and devoured their cereals and divided them between them.[45] Then the Bedouins used to lie in wait for the time when the monks went out to draw water, and they slew some of them and took from others what they found on them in the way of clothes and the underskins in which they carried water." [46] Again during the reign of Anbâ Akhristûdulûs (1047-1079) the Lewatis occupied the Desert of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, pillaging and wrecking the monasteries and killing the monks.[47]

3. The 11th to the 16th Century

In response to the almost continuous attacks of the Bedouins, during the patriarchate of Anbâ Shanûdah the monasteries built their protecting walls, which enabled the monks to find refuge in times of danger. "The patriarch raised up at the Church of Abû Maqâr an excellent memorial... he resolved to build a fortified wall round the catholic church... he made in it dwelling places and elevated places in the shortest space of time, for he was labouring with the workmen as one of them." [48] It is likely that during this period also the other monasteries of Scetis fortified themselves against the constant danger of the Arabs. Evelyn White points out that "it is quite possible that some of the smaller monasteries had anticipated the Monastery of St.

---

(42) *Hist. Patr.*, II, I, 52-53.

(43) Synax., *Patr. Orient.*, XVI, 296-7.

(44) *Hist. Patr.*, II, I, 56.

(45) This uprising of the pillaging tribes was eventually put down. We know that the 'Alîds rose to the west of Alexandria in 869 A.D., and that other 'Alîds carried fire and sword through the district of Esna. Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages*, 61-2.

(46) *Hist. Patr.*, II, I, 60.

(47) *Hist. Patr.*, II, III, 315.

(48) *Ibid.*, II, I, 68.

Macarius and were already fortified." (49)

The history of Dair al-Barâmûs is similar to that of the other monasteries for the subsequent centuries. Like Dair Abû Maqâr it served as a haven of peace for the persecuted Christians during the reign of al-Hâkim (996-1021). After the death of Anbâ Shanûdah II in 1047, Anbâ Akhristûdulûs (1047-1077),(50) a monk from the Monastery of al-Barâmûs, was elected to the patriarchate, and according to established custom he proceeded to the Monastery of Saint Macarius where he was consecrated. He found the church in a rather bad state of affairs and drew up a series of canons that were designed to restore order.(51) Anbâ Akhristûdulûs had a brother in the monastic life, whose name was Ya'qûb and who became the abbot of the Monastery of al-Barâmûs, for he performed many miracles and was a great saint.(52) Akhristûdulûs, like some of his predecessors, was buried in Scetis in the Monastery of Abû Maqâr.

The life of the Coptic Church under the Fatimids was not always easy. Yazûrî, the Wazîr and Chief Qâdî of al-Mustansir bi'llah (1029-1094), (53) exacted many fines from the Copts on slight pretexts, furthermore, he is reported to have thrown Anbâ Akhristûdulûs into prison(54) on a false charge of having influenced the king of Nubia to withhold the yearly tribute. (55)

About the same time, the monasteries suffered from an insurrection within the caliph's forces. In 1069, Nasr ad-Dawlah ibn Hamdan, a Turkish leader, had gained the support of the Arabs and Lewatis Berbers who overran the Delta and made havoc of the monasteries of Wâdî Habîb. In 1073, the internal situation in Egypt was restored by the arrival of Badr al-Gemalî who with his army subdued the Lewatis Berbers and captured Alexandria by storm. It was his military strength that restored the caliph's authority as far as Aswân. (56)

One of the most informative statistics as to the status of the monasteries in the 11th century has been preserved in the introduction to the *History of the Patriarchs* by Mawhub ibn Mansûr ibn Mufarrig.[57] He had visited the Desert of Scetis in 1088 and recorded a total of 712 monks inhabiting seven monasteries, of whom twenty monks resided in the Monastery of al-Barâmûs.

---

(49) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 328-9.

(50) Synax., *Patr. Orient.*, III, 455. Anbâ Akhristûdulûs is commemorated on the 14th of Kihak.

(51) Canons of Christodoulus, *Le Muséon*, XLV, 71-84.

(52) *Hist. Patr.* II, III, 246, 286.

(53) Al-Mustansir bi'llah was the eighth Fatimid caliph and is known for the longest recorded reign of any Muslim ruler.

(54) The same fate happened to Yazûrî when the caliph threw him into prison with all his family in 1058. Shortly afterwards Yazûrî was executed.

(55) Lane-Poole, *op. cit.*, 143.

(56) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 355.

By this time the Coptic monasteries had attracted wide attention and their isolation and long history became the theme of several poets. One of the great literary figures of the 10th century was Abû 'l-Farag al-Isbahanî (897-966 A.D.), who was so taken by the monasteries, their inhabitants and the monastic way of life that he wrote about them in his *Book of Songs.*[58] The Arab historian Maqrîzî tells us about the poet Abu 'l-Fath Mahmûd ibn al-Husain, one of the most popular writers of his kind, who expressed his admiration for the monastic wine and the friendly hospitality in words of poetry.[59] Another poet praising the wine and the intimate atmosphere of the monasteries of that time was Ibn Abû Qasim.[60] Thus, during this period the monasteries apparently experienced a temporary season of some prosperity.

In the middle of the 13th century, during the patriarchate of Anbâ Ghabrîâl III (1268-1271) we hear of the reconstruction of the Monastery of al-Barâmûs.[61] Anbâ Ghabrîâl joined the ascetic life at the Monastery of St. Antony at the age of twelve. Later on, he went to the Desert of Scetis, where he became the "supérieur de l'Eglise de Notre Dame Marie au couvent de Saint Marmos."[62]

The patriarchate of Anbâ Yûânnis VIII (1300-1320) was again disturbed by persecutions and destructions of the churches. By the order of the emirs, when complaints were brought before them, such churches as had existed prior to the Arab conquest were permitted to remain, but those erected since that period were ordered to be destroyed. Many churches suffered heavy losses, with the exception "of those in the Desert of St. Macarius and at Alexandria."[63] Again, the monasteries became a haven of refuge.

The most severe dangers of the 14th century were not persecutions

---

(57) *Hist. Patr.*, II, II, 241.

(58) Larsow, *Die Festbriefe des Hlg. Athanasius,* 7.

(59) Wüstenfeld, *Maqrizi's Geschichte der Copten,* 91.

(60) *Ibid.*, 98. The full name of this poet is : Ibn Abû Qasim Abû'l 'Abbas Shihab ad-Dîn Ahmad Ibn Qasim al-Abbadî al-Masrî al-Shafay as-Asharî.

(61) Ethiopian Synax., *Patr. Orient.*, VIII, 312-7. Anbâ Ghabrîâl is commemorated by the Ethiopian Church on the 11th of Hamle, July 18. For the reconstruction work done by Anbâ Ghabrîâl III, see Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, III, 241.

(62) Marmos stands for Barâmûs.

(63) Neale, *A History of the Holy Eastern Churches,* II, 323.

or internal disturbances, but the "Black Death" followed by a subsequent famine. It decimated the population to such an extent that without doubt the monasteries were seriously affected. This must have been a staggering blow since their influence had dwindled at any rate.

When Maqrîzî's report was written sometime between 1419 and 1441, the Desert of Scetis had lost its impact upon the Coptic Church. Maqrîzî mentions that in previous days one hundred monasteries had stood in the Wâdî Habîb, of which only seven had survived.[64] Furthermore, he mentioned the incident of the 70,000 monks who were supposed to have greeted 'Amr ibn al-'Asî after having expressed their submission to the new regime.[65]

The Monastery of al-Barâmûs, which he identified with the Monastery of Mûsâ or Abû Mûsâ the Black, is mentioned as the 76th convent in his list of 86 monasteries. As stated elsewhere,[66] Maqrîzî saw in Maximus and Timotheus the sons of a Greek emperor who were educated by Anbâ Arsânîûs. After the death of his two sons, the emperor had the monastery built and gave it the name of Barâmûs. Abû Mûsâ the Black was a courageous robber who had slain a hundred people. Later he became a Christian and a monk and he wrote many books. He was one of those who passed the whole period of Lent without taking any food.[67]

4. The 17th and 18th century travellers.

The Monastery of al-Barâmûs, though comparatively insignificant in the early Middle Ages, supplied two monks who in the 17th century ascended the patriarchal throne, the 100th patriarch, Anbâ Mattâûs III (1631-1646), and the 102nd patriarch, Anbâ Mattâûs IV (1660-1675).[68] The first European visitor in the 17th century to call attention to the Monastery of al-Barâmûs was the French consul, Fr. J. Coppin. He wrote about the monastery in 1638 and called it the "fourth monastery" of those in the desert of St. Macarius Bahr el Malamah,[69] which means "Mer de reproche."[70] The monks told him that St. Macarius and his monks, when they saw a ship with pirates approaching, invoked the assistance of God, whereupon the waters of the gulf instantly receded,

---

(64) Wüstenfeld, *op. cit.*, 109.

(65) *Ibid.*, 110.

(66) *Cf.* p. 126.

(67) Wüstenfeld, *op. cit.*, 111-2.

(68) Renaudotius informs us that Matta, the 102nd patriarch, came from the Monastery of D. Mariæ in Exemo rather than from the Monastery of Maramous as Wansleben postulated. Renaudotius, *Histor. Patr. Alexandr. Jacob.*, 612.

(69) This term is obviously the Bahr bila Mâ' mentioned below.

(70) Coppin, *Relation des Voyages faits dans la Turquie, la Thébaide, et la Barbarie*, 345.

and everything that was there, including men, animals, and the ship was suddenly petrified. Fr. Coppin concluded his chapter on the monasteries of the Desert of St. Macarius by mentioning an additional monastery, which was called that of Our Lady, which was very large, but slightly ruined.[71] The impression that one gains from Fr. Coppin's description seems to indicate that by the beginning of the 17th century the Monastery of al-Barâmûs was one of the leading, if not the leading monastery in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn.

That the monastery had regained its potentiality for leadership is also asserted by Thévenot, who, writing in 1657, identifies it with the "Dir el Saydet", that is to say, the Monastery of Our Lady.[72] "It is very spacious, but a little ruinous. It hath a fair church and garden, but the water is brackish, and nevertheless, there are more monks in this monastery than in the other three, because the revenue of it is greater, and they have some relicks also." [73]

Twenty-one years after Thévenot's description of the Monastery of al-Barâmûs, Huntingdon reached the monastery in which there were to be seen many ruined cells and a church. Furthermore, he mentions that the monastery was occupied by a superior and twenty-five monks.[74] When in 1692, de Maillet visited Egypt and passed by the Monastery of al-Barâmûs he heard the same legend repeated which the monks had told Fr. Coppin,[75] which caused him to write about the Desert of St. Macarius or the Valley of Bahr bila Mâ', an Arabic term which means "Mer sans eau."[76] All he adds to the picture is, that in this arid and desolate desert one finds two or three monasteries apart from the Monastery of St. Zachariah *(sic)*, which are inhabited by Coptic monks. "It is a small number of people that in our days (the end of the 17th century) inhabit these once famous monasteries." [77]

In 1710, Fr. du Bernat, S.J., proceeded from the Monastery of the Syrians to that of the Virgin of al-Barâmûs. Having arrived there, he informs us that three or four stone-throws from the monastery one could discover the sad remains of ten or twelve sacred buildings which were very close to each other, and among which one could name still

---

(71) This no doubt referred to the Monastery of the Virgin of Barâmûs, which seemed to have been the more important monastery at this time.

(72) Thévenot, *The Travels of Monsieur de Thévenot into the Levant,* I, 244.

(73) *Ibid.*

(74) *Huntingtoni epistolae,* ed. Smith, quoted, by Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 421.

(75) Coppin, *loc. cit.*

(76) De Maillet, *Description de l'Egypte,* 296.

(77) *Ibid.*

the Monastery of Moses the Black and the Church of St. Maximus and Domitius.[78]

The next visitor to give some information as to the status of the Monastery of al-Barâmûs was the Fr. Claude Sicard, S.J., who visited this monastery in 1712.[79] On the 11th of December, after the night office in the Monastery of the Syrians, Fr. Sicard departed for the Monastery of al-Barâmûs, or that of the Greeks (Romans). The hegoumenos of the monastery, who happened to be a young priest, received him in the monastery. At the time of his visit, the place was occupied by twelve or fifteen monks, though some of them were laymen who had been admitted by order of the Patriarch.[80]

In 1778, C.S. Sonnini, who formerly had served as an officer and engineer of the French Navy, left the village of Honeze for the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. The first monastery which he visited was the one which "is called by them Maximous, probably the Saint Maximus of the Catholic Legend." [81] Here Sonnini and his party were attacked by a group of Bedouins who robbed him of all belongings, even undressing him. After long debate and the rather heroic attitude displayed by his servant, Husain,[82] his property was restored to him. Having overcome the danger of the Arabs, Sonnini and his party had to undergo a second embarrassment. "They (the monks) could have no doubt of our being Europeans", writes Sonnini, "they pretended, however, not to believe it, and required that one of us should demonstrate to a father sent on purpose as an examiner, that we had not undergone any religious mutilation." [83]

Finally, he was permitted entry to the monastery, which he thought was formerly inhabited by Greek monks who had been succeeded by Copts.[84] The monastery, which he now identified as Zaidi al-Barâmûs, contained apart from the vaulted, low cells of the monks, a simple church without ornament other than a few ostrich eggs and some badly

---

(78) Du Bernat, *Nouveaux Memoires des Missions...* II, 68.

(79) Sicard, *Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses*, III, 189.

(80) *Ibid.*, 178.

(81) Sonnini, *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt*, 340.

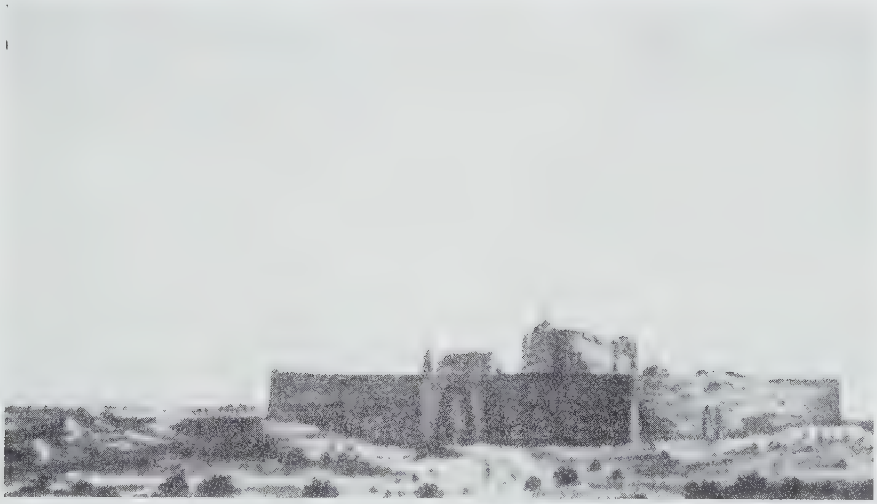
(82) According to the monks this very Husain was the "most formidable of the Bedouins, the most determined of the robbers... who ten years before, in 1768 had breached into the great wall and pillaged and sacked the monastery". *Ibid.*, 352.

(83) *Ibid.*, 347. Probably to see whether they were circumcised or not. The apparent interest in this operation attributed to Coptic monks is also substantiated by Ludovico di Varthema, who visited Egypt in 1503. *Cf.* Ludovico di Varthema, *Travels, etc.*, 285.

(84) Sonnini, *op. cit.*, 351.

painted pictures of saints. The religious services were performed in Arabic and Coptic. "Want of occupation had made us devout," Sonnini continues, "we seldom missed attending church." [85]

Regarding the reliquary, our French naval officer quoted first the version of the Arabs who "like true reprobates allege that the shrine contains only bones of camels and asses that have died in the desert. The monks, on the contrary, maintain that it is the repository of the bodies of seven saints, among whom they most particularly revere two, St. Maximus and St. Domadious." [86] At the time of his visit, there were only three priests and some friars, but the Coptic cultivators came here from time to time to do penance.... thus there were in all twenty-three persons in the monastery. "They eat in common in a refectory, and one of them reads during the meals." [87] From Zaidi al-Barâmûs, Sonnini took with a compass the position of the building which could be seen from the top of the walls, and after having stayed for five days at Dair al-Barâmûs proceeded to the Monastery of the Syrians.[88]



Sonnini, 1778

Dair al -Barâmûs.

The French naval officer was followed by a French general. This was Count Antoine Andréossy, artillery officer and diplomat — for he had served as French ambassador in London, Vienna and Constantinople — who went on a military reconnaissance to the Monasteries

---

(85) *Ibid.*, 354.

(86) *Ibid.*, 356.

(87) *Ibid.*, 357.

(88) *Ibid.*, 364.

in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn in January 1799. With military precision he measured the distances between the various monasteries, and the distance between the Monastery of al-Barâmûs and that of the Syrians is 9,258 metres.[89] In a general statement he observes that every monastery was enclosed by walls which are 13 metres high and 2.50 to 3.00 metres thick at their base.[90] In 1799, only nine monks lived at the Monastery of al-Barâmûs, while the total number of monks in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn had slightly increased to fifty-nine, for at the time of Fr. Claude Sicard's visit in 1712, less than forty monks inhabited the monasteries.[91]

5. The 19th and 20th Century Travellers

In 1828, Lord Prudhoe visited the Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn in search of Coptic manuscripts. In the Monastery of al-Barâmûs he was shown the library, where he selected a number of manuscripts for purchase.[92]

In March 1837, the Honorable Robert Curzon left Cairo and travelled by boat to the village of at-Tarânah which was the nearest spot upon the banks of the Nile to the monasteries which he proposed to visit. The Dair al-Barâmûs was the first monastery to be visited by Curzon. "This monastery consisted of a large stone wall, surrounding a square of about an acre in extent. A large square tower commanded the narrow entrance, which was closed by a low and narrow iron door. Within there was a good-sized church in tolerable preservation.... two or three poor looking monks still tenanted the ruins of the abbey. They had hardly anything to offer us, and were glad to partake of some of the rice and other eatables which we had brought with us.... we went into the square tower, where, in a large vaulted room with open unglazed windows, were 40 or 50 Coptic manuscripts on cotton paper, lying on the floor, to which several of them adhered firmly, not having been moved for many years. I only found one leaf on vellum, which I brought away. The other manuscripts appeared to be all liturgies ; most of them smelling of incense when I opened them, and well smeared with dirt and wax from the candles...." [93]

Dr. Tattam visited the Monastery of al-Barâmûs, in January 1839. He found one hundred Coptic and Arabic Liturgies, and a very large Dictionary in both languages. "In the tower is an apartment, with a

---

(89) Andréossy, *"Mémoire sur la vallée des lacs de Natrun,"* 298.

(90) *Ibid.*, 292.

(91) In 1712 : al-Barâmûs : 12-15 monks, Surîân : 12-15 monks, Bishoî : 4 monks, Abû Maqâr : 4 monks.

(92) *Quarterly Review*, LXXVII, 51, quoted by Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 455.

(93) Curzon, *Visits to the Monasteries in the Levant*, 82-4.

trap door in the floor, opening into a dark hole full of loose leaves of Arabic and Coptic Liturgies. The Superior of this Monastery is a fine old man, exceedingly obliging, and would have sold the large selim, but dare not on account of the Patriarch's having written in it a curse upon any one who should take it away. There was no person in the monastery who could write Coptic, or they would have copied it for Dr. Tattam, but they said that if he could obtain the Patriarch's consent, he should have the book itself. They also stated that some time since, a European who visited their monastery, made such a strenuous attempt to obtain possession of it, that they were now almost afraid to show it to travellers." [94]

When Sir Gardner Wilkinson travelled to the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn in 1842, the Monastery of al-Barâmûs was inhabited by only seven monks.[95]

In the year of Sir Gardner's visit to Dair al-Barâmûs, a monk entered the monastery who some thirty years later was to become the 112th Patriarch. Anbâ Kîrillus V had gone first to the Monastery of the Syrians, where he had stayed for only a few days. In 1843, at the age of twenty, he joined the Monastery of al-Barâmûs and after a month he became a monk. At that time, only four monks inhabited the monastery.[96] In 1844, he was called to become a parish priest in Cairo, but he soon returned to the monastery, where he was elected to the hegoumenship. During his stay at the monastery the number of monks increased to thirty. He founded theological schools at Dair al-Barâmûs, Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs and Dair al-Muharraq, and he did much to further the study of the Coptic language.[97]

Konstantin von Tischendorf visited the Monastery of al-Bârâmûs at the very end of his tour to the monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. When he called there he met with 20 monks. "Here the cells were the blackest of all. The superior here had a peculiar custom ; he sat beside me in the cell, and as often as a pause was made in the conversation, he interposed the formula of welcome, Salam, Salam, and repeated the pantomime of his hands. What I inquired for, and everywhere in vain, was manuscript accounts of the history of the monastery. But not a line of such a record was known. Thus they live carelessly from day

---

(94) Platt, *Journal of a Tour through Egypt,* I, 386.

(95) Wilkinson, *Modern Egypt and Thebes,* I, 386.

(96) *The History of the Patriarchs,* III, IV, and Addition, *MS.* 219 in the Coptic Museum, 270.

(97) *Ibid.,* 271.

to day. To such an existence, what is the past and what is the future." [98]

On November 23rd, 1875, Dr. Wilhelm Junkers stopped at the Monastery of al-Barâmûs where he was very politely received, though some of the questions of the monks appeared to him rather incoherent. [99]

One of the first travel-guides to advise tourists to visit the Monasteries of Wâdî 'n-Natrûn was Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Lower and Upper Egypt* (1880). After having dealt with the other three monasteries, Murray continues his account by saying : "A ride of two hours from Deyr es Syrian brings us to Deyr Barâmûs, a large convent, for which an antiquity of 1600 years is claimed. It boasts of four churches, and one monk (in 1874), who was an Abyssinian." [100]

Travelling from Bûlâq ad-Dakrûrî via Kafr Dâûd, Fr. Michael Jullien, S.J., and his party consisting of the priests Eugène Nourrit and Joseph Noory and Mr. Jean Palamarie, arrived in 1881 at the Monastery of al-Barâmûs. Two monks of the monastery, Abûnâ Girgis and Abûnâ Sulaimân had joined the group at Kafr Dâûd and were helpful in leading the way to the desert monasteries. The hegoumenos of the monastery, Abûnâ 'Abd al-Masîh, welcomed the missionaries and the traditional hospitality was extended to them.[101] At that time, the monastery was inhabited by twenty monks of whom only four were priests. Later in the day, Fr. Jullien was shown around the monastery, especially the churches. In the Church of Al-'Adhrâ he saw about one hundred books, most of them in Arabic and Coptic, and most of them were printed by Protestant agencies in London, New York or Beirut. Then they visited the refectory, which appeared to Fr. Jullien to be the most ancient part of the monastery. As it was his mission, he engaged in a religious conference and tried to persuade the Coptic monks to understand their "faulty schismatic doctrines". On their way from the Monastery of al-Barâmûs to that of the Syrians, they encountered many interesting experiences. In addition to seeing

---

(98) Tischendorf, *Travels in the East*, 53. Lobegott F.K. v. Tischendorf (1815-1874), the discoverer of the forty-three leaves which are now known as the *Codex Sinaiticus*. Fragments were published in 1840 as the *Codex Friderico-Augustanus*. In 1850 appeared the edition of the *Codex Amiatinus* and in 1852 the *Codex Claromontanus*,

(99) Junkers, *Reisen in Africa, 1875-86*, I, 37.

(100) Murray, *op. cit.*, II, 366.

(101) Jullien, *L'Egypte. Souvenirs Bibliques et Chrétiens*, 38 f.

gazelles and the traces of desert wolves, they found a perfect imprint of an ostrich.[102]

In 1883, Alfred J. Butler visited the Monastery of al-Barâmûs coming from the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî. "Our guide and herald, deputed by the Patriarch, had gone on some way before us : and when, on mounting the last ridge, we sighted the monastery, dark figures were faintly visible upon the distant parapets. As we neared, the monks descended, and stood grouped in clear relief outside, under the white walls of their fortress. When we were within two hundred yards of the gate, the monks advanced towards us with waving banners. They kissed our hands as we dismounted : then formed a procession in front of us, and advanced chanting psalms and beating cymbals and triangles, while the great bell of the convent clashed out a tumultuous welcome.[103] The service of welcome was conducted in the Church dedicated to al-Barâmûs, a name of which the origin is uncertain.[104] Unfortunately, a restoration not quite finished had stripped the church of every single feature of interest, and apparently changed even the old lines of the building.... There is, however, a fine ancient church still remaining, though not undamaged by the white-wash, in which the monastery rejoices." [105] Attached to the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Butler describes the two chapels, dedicated to Mârî Girgis (St. George) and Al-Amîr Tadrûs (St. Theodore the General). The former lies to the west of the main church, while the latter opens out of the middle of the north aisle which it adjoins. In the Chapel of the Archangel Michael, Butler discovered some fragments. "Here lies a pile of loose leaves of manuscripts, which cover nearly half the floor of the chapel to a depth of about 2 feet : and here I thought at last was a real chance of undiscovered treasure. So I spent some hours in digging among the pile, in choking and blinding dust ; armful after

---

(102) *Ibid.*, 44. As to the existence of ostriches in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, the monks claim to have discovered several old nests. There is no question, that at one time the ostrich was quite common in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. We read that, in 1816, J.L. Burckhardt saw ostriches in the desert between Cairo and Suez. Prince Halim Pasha relates that he has seen destroyed nests of ostriches at a distance of a day's journey from Cairo. Pococke (1743) noticed the bird in the district south-west of Alexandria, and Minutoli observed "groups of 10 to 15 ostriches" on his way from Alexandria to Siwah. *Cf.* Finsch, O., *Baron Carl Claus von der Decken's Reisen in Ost-Afrika*, IV, 598.

(103) Butler, *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt*, I, 327.

(104) *Ibid.*, 329. Butler identifies Maximus and Domitius as sons of the Greek Emperor Leo according to a 14th cent. *MS.* (Bib. Or. 258, fol. 16^{o}).

(105) *Ibid.*

armful was taken up, searched, sifted, and rejected. Here and there a tiny fragment of early Syriac, Coptic, or even Greek on vellum, half a leaf of a Coptic and Ethiopic lexicon ; several shreds of Coptic and Arabic Lexicons ; countless pages of mediaeval Coptic or Copto-Arabic liturgies : this was the only result of the most diligent search, and the quest ended in final disappointment. The monks were very good-natured, allowing me to take away my little pieces of worthless paper as memorials of my visit, but declining with courteous firmness to give or sell the whole collection of rubbish ; for they required the leaves, they told me, to bind their new books, and all the paper in Cairo would not answer their purpose so well."[106] After that, Butler conversed with the kindly old hegoumenos who was in special distress because the Lay Council in Cairo had threatened to sequestrate the revenues of the monastery and to administer the estates as a sort of ecclesiastical commission. Generally speaking, the monastery appeared to Butler cleaner than the others. It was inhabited by about 25 monks, the same number that Huntingdon had found there two centuries before. At any rate, a great change had come over the monastery since Sonnini's visit one hundred years before.

Not far from the Monastery of al-Barâmûs in a westerly direction lies the great valley "Al Bahr bila Mâ'," or the "Waterless River". The monks have a characteristic legend for the scene, for they relate that the "Waterless River" was dried up at the prayers of St. Macarius, in order to punish the pirates, whose depredations vexed the early Christian anchorites; and they point to the logs encumbering the ground as the wrecks of the pirate fleet, which was turned to stone.[107] From the Monastery of al-Barâmûs, Butler returned to his camp at Dair Anbâ Bishoî.

In 1892, Anbâ Kîrillus V, wishing to have the sole administration over the Coptic Church, attempted to abolish the Coptic Church Council, the Maglis al-millî, which was elected by members of the Coptic Church, and which was given authority by *décret-loi* in 1883. The members of the Maglis al-millî, however, signed a petition which they sent to the Government, requesting the same to intervene. By a decision of the Ministerial Council of the Egyptian Government of July 28, 1892, the Patriarch was exiled to Dair al-Barâmûs. The Bishop of Sanabû accepted to act as *locum tenens* in the absence of the Patriarch. He engaged the services of the Maglis al-millî, whereupon he was excommunicated by the Patriarch. Upon the intervention of Butrus Ghâlî Pasha,

---

(106) *Ibid.*, 333.

(107) *Ibid.*, 337.

a person of note in the Coptic Church, the situation was solved. The functions of the Maglis al-millî were modified, and the bishops presented a petition to the Khedive Abbas II, requesting the return of the Patriarch. The Patriarch returned on January 9, 1893, after six months of exile.

During the last decade of the 19th century, the Monastery of al-Barâmûs was the scene of internal disturbance. Naoum, who was a Syrian monk, was ordained hegoumenos of the monastery, and later, on October 17, 1897, he was ordained bishop. Known as Anbâ Isîdûrûs, he was excommunicated by Anbâ Kîrillus V on December 31, 1897 for acts of insubordination. Isidore was an industrious scholar who published twenty-five books on Coptic theology, pastoral theology and history, though many of his volumes bear the marks of an apology which was not critical and which was full of prejudice.[108] In 1927, Isidore published the Canons of Ibn al-'Assâl and Kîrillus III. At the beginning of 1941, he submitted a petition to Anbâ Yûânnis XIX, begging him to forgive him. In March 1941, with the help of Abûnâ Dâûd al-Maqârî, he obtained absolution from the patriarch.

Another monk who was engaged in theological studies at the Monastery of al-Barâmûs was 'Abd al-Masîh ibn Girgis al-Mas'udî who having entered the Dair al-Muharraq, joined the Monastery of al-Barâmûs at a later date. 'Abd al-Masîh was the author of works on Coptic dogmatics and of a diatribe directed against the Protestants.[109] This monk should not be confused with two other monks who were theological writers and who happen to bear the same name.[110]

In March 1904, Agnes Smith Lewis and her sister Margaret Dunlop Gibson visited the Monastery of al-Barâmûs which they considered much cleaner and in better order than the other monasteries they had seen. They also gained the impression that it was visited much more frequently by strangers, which made them believe that they may not have been the first women to visit this monastery.[111]

During the last few days of June 1905, the Kaufmann Expedition arrived in the vicinity of the desert monasteries of the Natrûn Lakes. The first monastery which they reached was that of al-Barâmûs. "A few hundred yards in front of the monastery we made a brief halt in order to load our guns, a proceeding which resulted in a curious misunderstanding. The guards of the monastery had long spied us through

---

(108) Graf, *Gesch. d. christl. arab. Lit.* IV, 115, 116, 145-8.

(109) *Ibid.*, 153.

(110) 'Abd al-Masîh ibn 'Abd al-Malek al-Mas'udî al Muharraqî and 'Abd al-Masîh ibn Salîb al-Mas'udî al-Barâmûsî.

(111) Lewis, "Hidden Egypt," 757.

a loop-hole in the battlements, and the proceedings with the guns aroused suspicion."[112] After Falls had handed his card to the monks and surrendered his weapons, the party was hospitably received. They were informed that no stranger ever came to the monastery in summer. Apparently, the preliminaries before entering the monastery were dictated by prudence, and the fact, that a few weeks before an Arab had shot a monk. "Of the thirty monks who inhabited the little town formed by a chaos of houses, cells, chapels, and corridors, some at least understand a little of another tongue besides Arabic, the chief priest or abbot, Anbâ Ghabrîâl, knows Coptic pretty well, and was not a little proud when his knowledge of Greek and Coptic manuscripts was proved by the monks."[113]

During their survey of the monastery which took them four hours, Anbâ Ghabrîâl's kindness showed itself in a special manner. They were shown the remains of a once valuable library and, towards the evening, a bath was prepared for the visitors.

The three-storied outer-wall supported by lofty pillars was 170 paces long, and almost as broad, according to this report. Falls visited the qasr with its many chambers and subterranean cells. Very little remained of the mass of fragments of manuscripts which J. Butler saw in one of the adjoining chambers. At Dair al-Barâmûs the members of the expedition heard of the presence of an anchorite in the monastery walls. "A quietist in the stillness! A sage amid the unrest of the desert! A talented saint in the company of careless, thoughtless monks! An aspiring character and yet without ambition, a personality, a recluse, a noble man!"[114]

In the church of Al-'Adhrâ, Falls saw the reliquary of the two Saints, Maximus and Domitius, the two Romans, who were sons of the Emperor Leontius. Among many other things of interest, Falls mentions a valuable treasure of the monastery, an amphora containing a wine fifty years old, some of which was offered to the guests. In the same room was kept the Holy Myron (Chrism), concealed in a niche in the wall. After having inspected all points of interest, the members of the expedition departed from the monastery in the direction of Dair as-Surîân.

In 1909 and 1910, and again in 1910 and 1911, the Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expedition commissioned Mr. W. J. Palmer-Jones to spend several weeks in the Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn

---

(112) Falls, *Three Years in the Libyan Desert,* 74.

(113) *Ibid.,* 75.

(114) *Ibid.,* 82.

to make plans of buildings and supplement the same by drawings and photographs.[115]

In 1912, Jean Brémond went on a pilgrimage to the Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. Coming from Alexandria, he got off the train at Tiyâ 'l-Barûd to change for Khatâtba. Having arrived in the Wâdî, he was the guest of Mr. Debourg, the director general of the Egyptian Salt and Soda Company. Quoting figures from 1910, he informs us that the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn was inhabited by 763 people, of whom 61 were able to read and to write; 672 were Muslims, 64 Copts, 19 Catholics and 8 Protestants.[116]

The first monastery visited by Brémond was that of al-Barâmûs where he noticed the new episcopal residence which had been built by the Bishop of Alexandria, Mgr. Yûânnis. The style of this building resembled that of the new bourgeois homes of the Egyptians. Brémond wrongly concluded that the monastery belonged to the See of Alexandria, and that the bishop visited the monastery to enjoy at times the clean air of the desert. The monks showed Brémond around the monastery and while noticing the various buildings, he compared his observations with those of Fr. Sicard and Fr. Jullien. Brémond's booklet makes interesting reading though it is difficult to date his visit to the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn.[117]

In October 1913, Johann Georg, Duke of Saxony, visited the desert monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. The party, consisting of Marcus Simaika, the Reverend Dr. Karge and the Duke, travelled by train from Cairo to Khatâtba. Here they changed for a special train of the Salt and Soda Company that took them to Bîr Hooker.

The Monastery of al-Barâmûs was the first to be visited. The reception of the Duke was cause enough to celebrate, and he was seemingly impressed and moved by the ecclesiastical pomp and circumstances with which the monks welcomed him. He noticed among other things some building and reconstruction activity, and his judgment regarding the renovation of the main church is rather critical. "The haikal has been decorated in an ugly manner, purple and pink. It is inexplicable to me, how it is possible to create such a

---

(115) Jones, "The Coptic Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn", *Metr. Mus. Bull.*, 6, 7.

(116) Brémond, *Pèlerinage au Ouadi Natroun*, 14 ff.

(117) The date 1912 is reached by inference. His publication shows neither publisher nor date. Since he mentions numerous caravans in 1910 and 1912 which passed through the Wâdî, his visit should be placed in 1912 or later.

monstrosity." [118] In connection with the library, the Duke chose to refer to it as a mere collection of books. There were almost no manuscripts, and those which were there, were of little or no value. Apart from the main church, he visited the ancient church, which according to his estimation contained some interesting things. He noticed the beautifully carved haikal doors and some capitals. The refectory, which he assigned to the seventh century, impressed him more like a prison than a dining hall. Though he saw a certain quantity of bread in the dining-hall, he did not taste anything of it. Then he was shown a bell with the names of the four evangelists engraved in Gothic, which he identified as belonging to the end of the fifteenth century.[119]

In 1920, Hugh Evelyn White, H. Burton and W. Hauser went several times for many weeks to the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn Monasteries to complete the work of the Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expedition begun by Mr. Palmer-Jones. They supplemented the collection with drawings and photographs of the monastery, and provided the material that a few years later was published in the monumental work on the Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn by Evelyn White.[120]

In 1923, Dr. William Hatch visited the Monastery of al-Barâmûs with his Arab servant 'Abduh. His impressions of the monastery were altogether favourable. It was the most prosperous and well kept monastery of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn group, and thirty monks were living there. The hegoumenos, whose name was Cyril, welcomed Hatch in a most cordial manner and invited him to remain in the monastery for several days. The library was clean and well arranged and he saw many Coptic and Arabic manuscripts, as well as a number of printed books. "There were no loose leaves lying about to be had for the asking, and I was obliged to leave al-Barâmûs with no souvenir of my visit except the memory of a pleasant day." [121]

The second visit of Johann Georg, Duke of Saxony, took place 15 years after his first venture into the Desert of Scetis. Again the first monastery to be visited by the expedition was that of al-Barâmûs. His interest in ancient manuscripts caused him to be presented with an initial of a 15th century document. The bell, which had already caught his attention in 1912, was still there, and, according to his judgment, once belonged to a Franciscan Church.[122]

---

(118) Johann Georg, *Streifzüge durch die Kirchen und Klöster Aegyptens*, 29.

(119) *Ibid.*

(120) Evelyn White, *The Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn*, II, III.

(121) Hatch, "A visit to the Coptic Convents in Nitria," 100.

(122) Johann Georg, *Neue Streifzüge durch die Kirchen und Klöster Aegyptens*, 44.

In the spring of 1930 and 1931, Prince 'Umar Tûssûn visited the four monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn in company with Professor Breccia and Dr. Puy-Haubert. His visit was to substantiate his wide studies of the history of the desert monasteries which he published in 1931 under the title *Etude sur le Wadi Natroun, ses moines et ses convents.* From a purely historical point of view, this work was the third of its kind, after Prof. F. Larsow's historical treatment of the desert monasteries which prefaced the *Festal Letters of St. Athanasius* (1852), and the monumental history of the Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn by Evelyn White. The statistical information provided by the Prince is revealing and interesting at the same time. From the following statistical study it is obvious that the Monastery of al-Barâmûs is the wealthiest monastery in the Desert of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, at least in terms of real estate.

The property of the four monasteries in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn according to the figures given to Prince 'Umar Tûssûn by the Coptic Patriarch was as follows : [123]

The Monastery of Abû Maqâr	145 feddans.
The Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî	106 feddans.
The Monastery of the Syrians	134 feddans.
The Monastery of al-Barâmûs	244 feddans.

In addition to the land owned by the respective monasteries, they all owned houses in towns and cities from which they collected the rent.[124]

In 1931, Mary Rowlatt set out to visit the desert monasteries in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. In her delightful narrative, *A Family in Egypt*, she describes in detail the difficulties of her journey by car that took her two days from Cairo, a distance that can be easily covered now within two hours. "We did the last bit on foot, as both cars had stuck, so we approached the first monastery in absolute silence. And the silence of the desert can be absolute, the only live things in view were a few swallows which circled round our heads, swooping forth and back again in great curiosity. On arrival we clanged the great bell in a whitewashed tower above us and waited. Eventually a young bearded monk opened a postern gate and welcome us in."[125]

In its sessions from 1933-1935 the *Comité des Monuments de l'Art Arabe* commissioned its architect, Mr. Edmond Pauty, to visit the four monasteries in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, and to study their condition from

---

(123) Toussoun, *Etude sur le Wadi Natroun,* 50.

(124) *Ibid.*

(125) Rowlatt, *op. cit.,* 155.

an architectural and archaeological point of view. In the *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte*, VII, Mr. Pauty described briefly some of the architectural characteristics of the four monasteries, beginning with the Dair Abû Maqâr. He considered this monastery to be in a good condition, and observed that the cells and the common rooms were recently restored. Following the description of the Monastery of St. Macarius are the studies of Dair Anbâ Bishoî, Dair al-Barâmûs and Dair as-Surîân.[126]

The role of the Monastery of al-Barâmûs from the 17th century onwards was that of a less important monastery. Outside violence, as mentioned by Sonnini,[127] may have been one of the reasons for the slow decay in spite of its size and its antiquity. Only six of the 116 patriarchs came from the Monastery of al-Barâmûs.[128] By the end of the 19th century, however, partly due to the influence of Anbâ Kîrillus V, the situation changed. The monastery advanced in material wealth and prosperity which led the monks to replace some of their ancient buildings with new Levantine structures. One of these new Levantine, half French-looking houses is well described by H.V. Morton in his famous travel-log *Through Lands of the Bible*. Morton, who visited the Monastery of al-Barâmûs in 1937, informs us that he was impressed not only by the strength of the wall "but also by the vast archway which formed so strange a contrast to the gate itself. The archway was made for giants, but the gate for dwarfs."[129] At the time of his visit the monastery was inhabited by 35 monks.

6. The Monastery in the Middle of the 20th Century

To-day, the monastery has four churches. The Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary (al-'Adhrâ) is so entangled in a maze of structures that it is difficult to see it, except for its roof. To the north of the nave, near its western end there is located the Church of St. Theodore the General (al-Amîr Tadrûs), and in the west is the baptistry. Only two of the four monasteries have baptistries, Dair Anbâ Bishoî and Dair al-Barâmûs. Parents may take their infants to be baptized in the monasteries on account of a vow, or in order to obtain the blessing of the holy place. Added to the west of the Church of

---

(126) Pauty, "L'Archéologie Copte et l'œuvre du comité de conservation des monuments de l'Art Arabe, de 1933 à 1935," *op. cit.*, 81-86.

(127) Sonnini, *op. cit.*, 340 f.

(128) Anbâ Akhristûdulûs (1047-1078) Anbâ Yûânnis XIV (1571-1586), Anbâ Mattâûs IV (1660-1675), Anbâ Kîrillus V (1874-1927), Anbâ Yûânnis XIX (1928-1942), Anbâ Kîrillus VI (1959-).

(129) Morton, *Through Lands of the Bible*, 234.

Al-'Adhrâ is the Chapel of St. George (Mârî Girgis). At the north-wall of the Church of al-'Adhrâ is a new (1957) ivory inlaid feretory with glass windows which contains the bodies of Anbâ Mûsâ the Black and Theodosius. A dedication plaque informs us that the new feretory was a gift of Anbâ Banîâmîn, Metropolitan of Manûfîah. The ancient feretory stands vacant on the south side of the church. The bodies of SS. Maximus and Domitius, which Evelyn White believed to have been contained in the ancient feretory,[130] are actually buried under the central haikal. Fr. Jullien was told that the remains of the two Saints, were buried under the floor of the left aisle. The Church of al-'Adhrâ has altogether three haikals which show elements of widely different periods, some as old as the ninth century, while other parts show Fatimid influence.[131] The church is decorated by a number of icons representing Anbâ Antûnîûs and Anbâ Bûlâ, Abû Nofar, SS. Maximus and Domitius, Anbâ Abullû and Anbâ Abîb [132] and Anbâ Barsûm, Anbâ Kîrillus and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Chapel of St. Theodore the General (al-Amîr Tadrûs) is entered from the nave of the main church. Its interior is almost dark and no longer used for services. The haikal was once used as a store room for salt, but this is no longer the case. On the south wall of the chapel hangs an icon of St. George.

The Chapel of St. George (Mârî Girgis) is entered from the west end of the north aisle. The chapel is not used for services. All that remains is one icon of St. George.

As at Dair Anbâ Bishoî, the baptistry adjoins the north-east corner of the church. At the time of Evelyn White's study, the interior was totally dark and used as a storage for mats and baskets. Recently (1957-58), a window has been cut in the west wall of the baptistry to admit some light to the room.

At the time of Butler's visit to the monastery in 1883, the Church of St. John the Baptist was not quite completed.[133] This church was built by Anbâ Kîrillus V. The south haikal used to shelter a neatly arranged and classified library which is no longer contained in the church. The style of the building is hybrid and the predominant colour is light blue. The church has an altogether modern appearance.

---

(130) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, III, 238.

(131) For an architectural description, *cf.* Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, III, 234.

(132) Chester in his description refers to the Church of "Abolo wa Abib (Apollo and Apip) which is the Chapel of al-Amir Tâdrûs." Chester, *op. cit.*, 110.

(133) Butler, *op. cit.*, I, 329.

The qasr has three stories. The uppermost story is occupied by the Church of St. Michael. The walls evidently have been replastered recently and the manuscripts once noticed by Butler are all removed.[134]

The little room on the roof once was inhabited temporarily by Abûnâ Sarâbâmûm who, according to Evelyn White, was "the only living representative of the once large class of solitaries and hermits dwelling in towers." [135] Abûnâ Sarâbâmûn lived also as a solitary in a cave about thirty minutes distant from the monastery, which he visited only at certain seasons, such as Holy Week, when he would use the cell in the qasr. That he was a very practical person is implied by the following anecdote : When the machine-pump in the north-west corner of the garden broke down sometime in 1920, the only one capable of repairing it was Abûnâ Sarâbâmûn.[136]

This almost historical abode seems to have attracted solitaries throughout the last decade. A.F. Kersting visited all the four Wâdî 'n-Natrûn monasteries in or around 1949. In his description of the Monastery of al-Barâmûs, his attention was attracted by an Ethiopian solitary in the qasr, who had lived a life of complete solitude for 12 years. He had neither spoken to nor seen anybody during this period.

The cell, once inhabited by Abûnâ Sarâbâmûn, has been occupied since 1957 by Abûnâ Fîlîmûn al-Muharraqî.[137]

The walls around the monastery have a height of 10 to 11 metres and a thickness of about 2 metres. As in the case of the other monasteries, one has a magnificient view from the top of the walls of the interior of the monastery and the vastness of the desert.

The refectory, which is not used at present, is situated parallel to the main church. At the time of Sonnini's visit, meals were still eaten in the refectory, and the stone lectern with its roughly incised cross was also still in use.

The guest house is a 19th century Levantine villa-building which is comfortably furnished and which is reserved for the accomodation of the patriarch and visitors. A number of pictures decorate the reception hall. There are those of Anbâ Athânâsîûs, Metropolitan of Banî Suîf ; Anba Murqus, Metropolitan of Abû Tîg ; Anbâ Sâwîrûs, Metropolitan of Minya ; Anbâ Banîâmîn, Metropolitan of Manûfîah ; Anbâ Tû-

---

(134) Chester, *op. cit.*, 116.

(135) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, III, 233.

(136) *Ibid.*, 247.

(137) Abûnâ Fîlîmûn (Philemon) joined the Dair al-Muharraq in 1928, where he served for several years as sub-hegoumenos. Since 1945 he was known for his charismatic ministry of "casting out devils." In 1957, the left the Dair al-Muharraq with 8 other monks for the Monastery of al-Barâmûs.

mâ, the late Metropolitan of Tantâ ; Anbâ Makârîûs, Bishop of the Monastery of al-Barâmûs, and Abûnâ Bârnâba (Barnabas), at one time hegoumenos of the Monastery of al-Barâmûs.

Comparatively few visitors have called on the monks of Dair al-Barâmûs because of its isolated location, for the monastery can be reached only by jeep. Of foreign visitors only three Germans and the Danish Ambassador with a group of four Danes visited the monastery during the period from July 1957 to July 1958.[138]

The library, at one time housed in the qasr, and later in the south haikal of the Church of St. John the Baptist, has been transferred to a room on the first floor in the eastern part of the monastery. The library has approximately 3,000 volumes which are kept in several cabinets neatly arranged, according to subjects : ritual, theological, hagiographical, Biblical, exegetical, medical, legal, mathematical, engineering, etc. The classification of the library was the work of the famous monk Abûnâ 'Abd al-Masîh ibn Salîb al-Barâmûsî. He was known throughout the monasteries in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn for his great learning. It is said that, besides Arabic and Coptic, he had a knowledge of Hebrew, Syriac, Greek and Latin, and a reading knowledge of English and French. He died in 1940 at the age of 70.

One of the most recent additions to the monastery is the high water-tower similar to that of Dair as-Surîân. The tower was completed in 1959.

The Monastery of al-Barâmûs, under the leadership of Anbâ Makârîûs, is inhabited by 20 monks, though this number changes frequently. Four monks can live in the Nile Delta at Tûkh Dalaka (formerly Tûkh an-Nasârah) where the desert monastery has its dependency. Of the twenty monks more than 50% are under 40 years of age, which is a favourable sign for the future of the monastery. In spite of serious challenges from the outside, as well as from within, the monastery has remained relatively steady in terms of its number of inhabitants.

It is interesting to note that Dair al-Barâmûs has been a home of Abyssinian monks longer than any other monastery in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. Lord Curzon still reported an Abyssinian "college" in the Monastery of the Syrians, but at the time of Evelyn White's visit to the monasteries in 1920, no Abyssinians were found in the whole area,

---

(138) The last visitors' book was the only book that I was shown by the monks.

except for seven monks who lived at Dair al-Barâmûs. In 1959 only three Abyssinian monks stayed at the Monastery.

To-day, 4.5 km. west of Dair al-Barâmûs is one of the few inhabited caves in the ancient Desert of Scetis. Abûnâ 'Abd al-Masîh al-Habashî has lived there since about 1935. Of the three caves, two are used by him. Some of the equipment of Abûnâ 'Abd al-Masîh is without doubt Second World War material. This solitary goes to the Dair al-Barâmûs weekly to obtain water, which he carries in an old gasoline tin on his head, as well as some bread. A number of years ago he would carry the tin full of water. To-day, however, due to his age, he can carry it only half-filled. Abûnâ 'Abd al-Masîh is a great story-teller. During the Second World War, at the time of Fieldmarshal Rommel's advance in North Africa, one night the British saw a small fire in the desert around Dair al-Barâmûs, and believing it to be that of a German spy,

'Abd al-Masîh al-Habashî.

they began to shoot, almost killing Abûnâ 'Abd al-Masîh. Later on, the British apologized to Abûnâ 'Abd al-Masîh, using the good offices of the monks of Dair al-Barâmûs.

Though peculiar in many ways, Abûnâ 'Abd al-Masîh was, and still is, a real inspiration to several Egyptian monks who cherish him greatly. Thus Abûnâ Mattâ al-Maskîn (now at Dair Anbâ Samwîl) wanted to live with him. The Ethiopian, however, in true Antonian manner,[139] refused to allow Abûnâ Mattâ to come close to him. Only after five days of continuous persistence and by leading an exemplary eremitical life, did the Ethiopian receive Abûnâ Mattâ who then stayed with him for several months. Another hermit influenced by the example of Abûnâ 'Abd al-Masîh is Abûnâ Antûnîûs as-Surîânî, who also lived for a time in one of the caves near those of the Ethiopian solitary.

I have visited Abûnâ 'Abd al-Masîh at two different occasions and was impressed by his utter indifference to the world. It was difficult for the solitary to understand that a German could be in Egypt, and that, furthermore, a German could also be a Christian. "A German is not, no, never a Christian, for Germans don't believe in God." His strong anti-German reaction is due undoubtedly to his war experience, where he was taken by the British for a German spy. The food which we brought along, the hermit refused, expressing his disgust by informing us that he would give it to the Bedouins. "God gives me my daily bread, you don't have to come and feed me." While trying to convince him that he should eat a little more to keep healthy, he merely answered: "When I am sick I enjoy the blessings of God even more, what else can I want than the blessings of God." When Abûnâ Antûnîûs suggested a wooden door for his cell he merely retorted: "A wolf doesn't need a door, does he?" He continued his discourse by saying: "All the monks, for that matter especially those at Dair al-Barâmûs and Dair as-Surîân are making war against me, telling me to eat and eat. They should know better that when you eat oil and fish (sardines), the devil will visit you at night, and you are at the mercy of the devil." In 1958, Abûnâ 'Abd al-Masîh left his cave for the first time to be taken to a physician in Alexandria. The doctor admonished him to eat, but the food which he received from him he merely passed on to the driver of the car. "My doctor is Jesus Christ, my food is Jesus Christ, my fuel is Jesus Christ."

The personality of Abûnâ 'Abd al-Masîh reveals many characteris-

---

(139) St. Antony at first refused to let Paul the Simple live with him. Only after several days of fasting was he admitted by the great Hermit.

tics of Oriental psychology, and it is not easy for the Western Christian to understand the dynamics of this solitary monk. That these, however, are real, is evident from the influence he has had on, at least, three people who already have made a distinct contribution to the Christian Church in Egypt : Abûnâ Mattâ al-Maskîn, Abûnâ Antûnîûs as-Surîânî and Abûnâ Mînâ al-Muttawahad al-Barâmûsî or Anbâ Kîrillus VI, the 116th Patriarch. Since I have written elsewhere about Abûnâ Mattâ al-Maskîn [140] and Abûnâ Antûnîûs as-Surîânî,[141] I want to mention only briefly the association of the present Patriarch with the Monastery of al-Barâmûs and Abûnâ ʻAbd al-Masîh.

7. Anbâ Kîrillus VI

The Cairo - Mâ'adi - Helwân suburban railway passes just after Old Cairo by a Coptic Church, the Church of St. Menas, which until very recently was known only to a comparatively small number of the faithful. From 1947 until 1959, this unobtrusive little church served as the abode of the present Patriarch, the 116th successor of St. Mark the Evangelist. There, in this southern part of the Egyptian metropolis, Abûnâ Mînâ al-Muttawahad al-Barâmûsî, as he was known prior to his election as Patriarch, cared for the disinherited, counselled the troubled and healed the sick, demonstrating an unusual concern for the less fortunate.

The Church of St. Menas, like any other Coptic Church, is decorated with icons of the saints, yet the careful observer cannot help but notice that the choice of saints is rather selective. There are the icons of the Desert Fathers, St. Samuel of Kalamon, St. Shenoute, the great reformer of early Coptic monasticism, and of the two Roman Saints, Maximus and Domitius, the patrons of the Monastery of al-Barâmûs.

Anbâ Kîrillus VI was born in 1902 at Tûkh an-Nasârah, a small village in the Nile Delta, where the Monastery of al-Barâmûs has its dependency and monastery farm. As a young boy he attended the primary school in Damanhûr and the secondary school in Alexandria. After he had finished his secondary education, he helped his brother for a while in a Dutch firm before joining in 1924 Thomas Cook and Sons. It was during his days in Alexandria that the present patriarch began reading the "Lives of the Desert Fathers", an experience that determined the course of his own life. At the age of 25, he approached the 113th Patriarch, Anbâ Yûânnis XIX (1928-1942) with a request to enter the Monastery of al-Barâmûs. It was in the historical Desert of Scetis that he became attached to the famous monk, Abûnâ ʻAbd al-Masîh al-Masʻudî al-Barâmûsî, who became his spiritual father. In

---

(140) *Cf.* Dair Anbâ Samwîl.

(141) *Cf.* Dair as-Surîân, No. 8.

1931, Abûnâ Mînâ al-Muttawahad was ordained to the priesthood, and after this he left the monastery to attend the Helwân School for Monks for two years. Believing that he was called to the solitary life, Abûnâ Mînâ again visited the Patriarch with the desire to re-establish the ancient White Monastery near Sohâg in Upper Egypt. But after a short stay in Upper Egypt, he was ordered to return, and he moved to the cave in the vicinity of the Monastery of al-Barâmûs where he spent his most formative years. Here, in the quiet of the desert, the present Patriarch learned and experienced the contemplative and anchoritic form of life, following in the steps of the great pioneers of the desert, St. Antony and St. Paul the Theban, who through their asceticism were and still are an inspiration to the entire Coptic Church. A few kilometres from the monastery, Abûnâ Mînâ al-Muttawahad inhabited the cave of Abûnâ Sarâbâmûn who had passed away just before Abûnâ Mînâ went to live there.

In the desert, miles away from civilization, the desert saint met the desert prophet, Abûnâ 'Abd al-Masîh the Ethiopian. It is difficult to ascertain the influence which the prophet may have had upon the mystic. Abûnâ Mînâ obtained his supplies of water and flour from the monastery and baked his own bread in his desert cave. He would spend hours and days fasting and praying for the purpose of purifying his soul.

In 1936, Abûnâ Mînâ again visited the Patriarch asking for his permission to rebuild the ancient Monastery of St. Menas at Mareotis.[142] Permission was refused, and from 1936 to 1942 Abûnâ Mînâ retreated to Gabal al-Guyûshî, east of Cairo, where he lived in one of the deserted windmills which were built during the reign of Muhammad 'Alî. The first few months he spent in building his cell and a small church. The nights he would sleep on the floor on a coarse sackcloth, sharing with a hyena the little food which he received as gifts from pilgrims to his abode.[143] One day, the Patriarch Anbâ Yûânnis XIXth climbed slowly up the mountain to visit the solitary monk in his deserted windmill. It was a long and hard way for the aging

---

(142) *Cf.*, Dair Abû Mînâ.

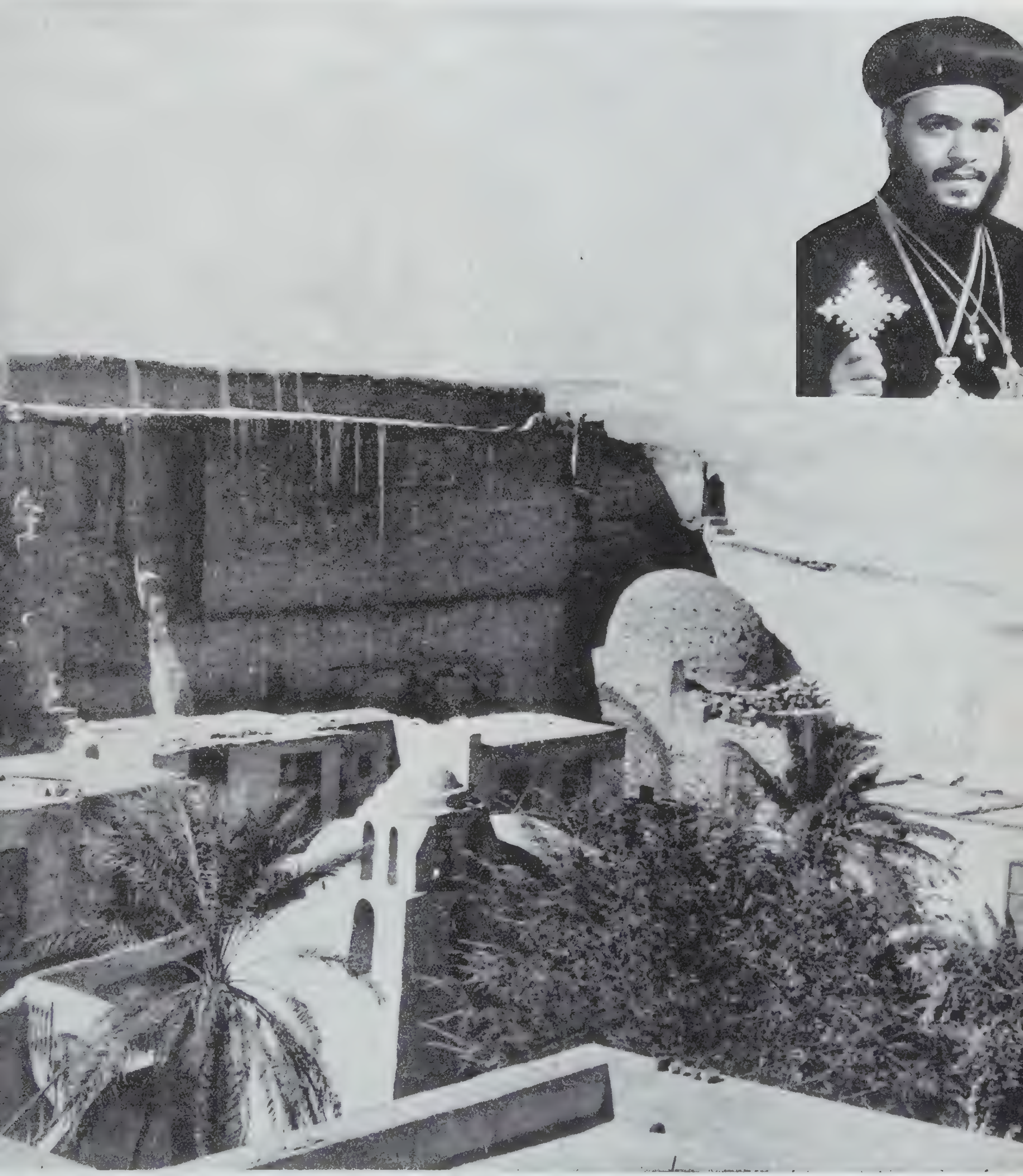
(143) According to Abûnâ Antûnîûs as-Surîânî "a monk is a person who expresses kindness to all creatures, even the lowliest, the insects and the scorpions, the lizards and the snakes." At one time, Abûnâ Antûnîûs saw a scorpion in his cave, but instead of being afraid, his faith in God was renewed. Ezekiel of Ermont was stung by a scorpion. The pain caused thereby, the ascete interpreted as a warning of the pains of hell. The animals and the fathers of the desert have so much in common, that they do not fight each other. They share in hunger, in thirst, in heat and in cold.

Patriarch. On his way to the anchorite he broke his patriarchal staff, the symbol of his calling. When he arrived at the cave of Abûnâ Mînâ, the hermit offered to repair it. But the Patriarch, after having given his staff to the monk refused to take it back, indicating that this staff would be his. Was this gesture a prophecy that his anchorite host would become his successor some twenty years later ?

During the Second World War, the British, believing him to be a spy, forced the desert monk to leave his solitary abode. Abûnâ Mînâ came down from the hills and for the following years he stayed in one room within the close vicinity of the churches of St. Michael and St. Theodore the Eastern (al-Mashrikî). It was during this time, that he was appointed hegoumenos of the Desert Monastery of St. Samuel at al-Qalamûn which is situated some 60 kilometres south of the Fayyûm, and which is the most isolated of all Coptic desert monasteries. Still many people sought the counsel and advice of Abûnâ Mînâ who had become a symbol of salvation for his extraordinary spiritual gifts which he had acquired during long years of contemplation and meditation. With the humble donations and gifts which he received, he bought a piece of land upon which he built the present Church of St. Menas. A few years later more land was added to the original establishment and a settlement-house was built next to the church. At first, Abûnâ Mînâ trained young students to enter the monastic and solitary life. When this project was discontinued he offered his rooms to university students from Upper Egypt who could stay there for a few piastres.

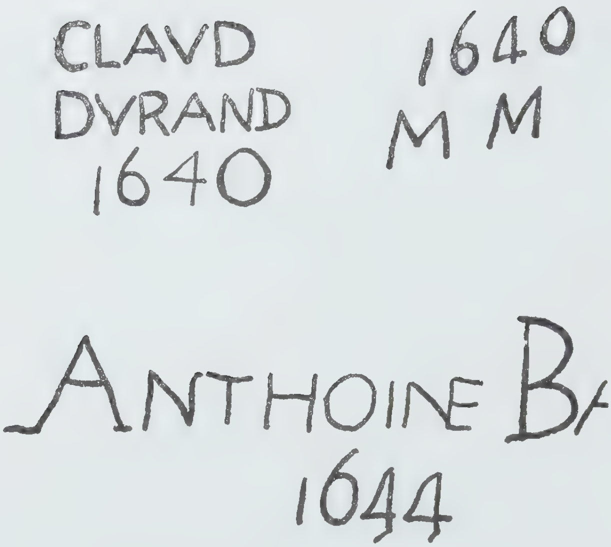
Apart from the prestige of the Patriarchal office, Anbâ Kîrillus VI has a profound influence upon some of the most progressive leaders of the Coptic Church. Abûnâ Makârî as-Surîânî and Abûnâ Mattâ al-Maskîn are two of the more influential disciples of Abûnâ Mînâ. A new era for the ancient Church of St. Mark may well have begun. There is good evidence to believe that the advisers to the new patriarch are recruited from the young, well-educated, university graduates, many of whom see in him their spiritual father.

On April 19, 1959, in the Patriarchal Church of St. Mark in Cairo the lot was cast in favour of Abûnâ Mînâ who thereby was elected the new Patriarch. That same Sunday morning the hermit celebrated the Divine Liturgy in his simple church near Old Cairo. When the news of the election was communicated to his church, the servant began ringing the church bell out of enthusiasm that Abûnâ Mînâ had been elected. But Abûnâ Mînâ, the simple monk, now a successor to St. Mark the Evangelist, stopped him, since he did not want his prayers to be interrupted. After the service his only comment was : "This is a new test, a new task that God has given me."



DAIR ABU MAQAR

Interior of the Monastery, centre, the Church of the Forty-nine Martyrs.
Inset : Anbâ Mîkhâîl, Metropolitan of Assiut and Hegoumenos of Dair Abû Maqâr.

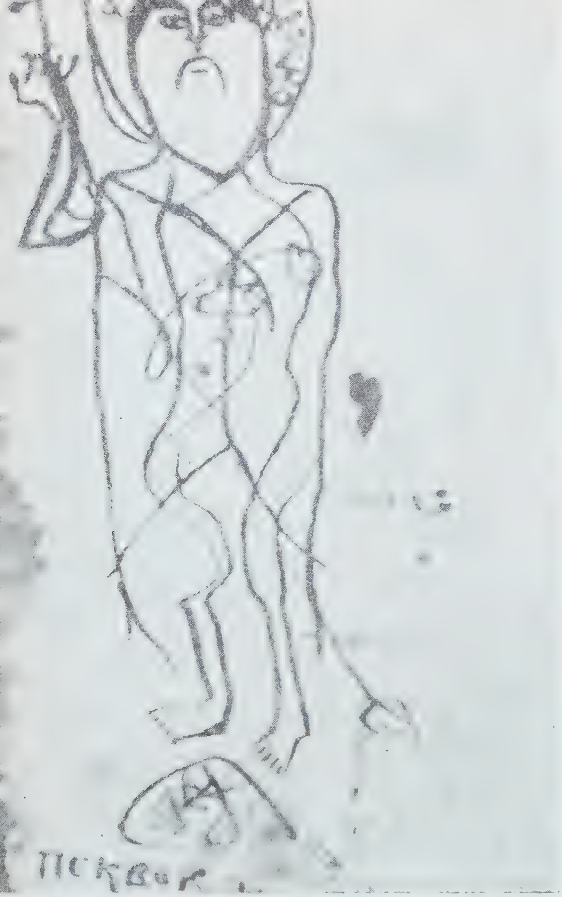


CLAVD
DVRAND
1640

1640
M M

ANTHOINE BA
1644

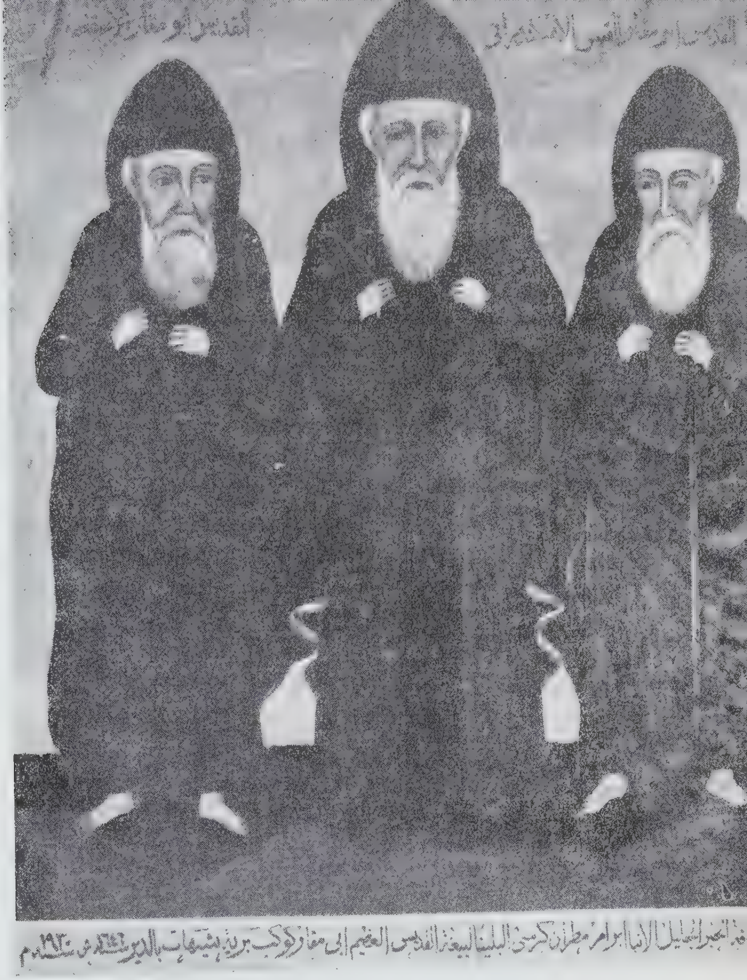
Graffiti in the Church of St. Michael.



Coptic Museum, No. 2497.

St. Macarius the Bishop.
Sketch in the margin of a text
of Exodus in Bohairic,
12th Century.

Centre : Belfry. Foreground : Church of St. Iskhirûn.



The Three Macarii. Left, St. Macarius the Bishop; centre, St. Macarius the Great; right, St. Macarius, Priest of Alexandria.

Dair Abû Maqâr

1. Abû Maqâr and the Foundation of the Monastery.

THE foundation of the monastic community of Abû Maqâr is closely associated with the life of one of the greatest Desert Fathers of the Coptic Church, St. Macarius the Great. The story of his life is told in the *Vita Macarii* by Serapion, the fourth century Bishop of Thmuis,[1] who claims to have been a disciple of St. Antony and a friend of St. Macarius.[2] With St. Macarius the Great the real history of the monastic life in the Desert of Scetis commences. St. Macarius had died only a

---

(1) For a discussion of the sources and authorship of the *Vita* of St. Macarius, *cf.* Evelyn White, *The Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn*, II, 60-61, and Appendix III, 465-468.

(2) "He was thirty years old when he went up to the desert, and he lived therein for sixty years." Palladius, *The Paradise of the Holy Fathers*... 114.

short time before Palladius' visit to Scetis in 390 A.D.,[3] and he was believed to have been about 90 years old at his death, which would place his birth at about 300 A.D.[4]

The Saint of Scetis was the son of a village priest. His parents had their property confiscated, and St. Macarius was born into poverty. When he was old enough, and had learned the Holy Scriptures, he was ordained a reader. As was the custom, his parents decided for him to be married, but St. Macarius avoided association with his wife because of his high esteem for virginity. He earned his subsistence by going out with the caravans to the Desert of Natrûn to fetch salt. On one occasion the caravan camped in the vicinity of the Wâdî, which was to become his future abode. While the camel driver, St. Macarius, was asleep, in a vision an angel promised him that his followers would inhabit that land. On his return home, his wife was stricken with a fever which a little later caused her death.

After distributing his goods among the poor, St. Macarius settled as a solitary near a neighbouring village. His stay, however, was a short one. A village girl accused St. Macarius of having seduced her, whereupon the villagers placed around his neck sooty pots and handles of pans, and beat him, saying: "This monk has seduced our daughter." After the girl bore a child she confessed that another man was the father. St. Macarius' reputation was thus restored, and all began to revere the Saint for the way in which he had borne so meekly the false accusation. It was this experience, however, that caused him to withdraw to the inner Desert of Scetis, where, at that time, no ascetics had settled. Thus he became the pioneer of the settlement which was to produce so many saints in the centuries that followed. His first settlement was in the vicinity of the present Monastery of al-Barâmûs. It was here that St. Macarius gave guidance and counsel to the two "Little Strangers" from overseas.[5]

After the death of the Roman princes, Maximus and Domitius, St. Macarius was led by an Angel (Cherubim) to a rock south of the Wâdî, and the Angel said unto him: "Begin to make for thyself a

---

(3) Palladius was born in 364 in Galatia and became an ascete in 384. In 388 he visited Alexandria and subsequently stayed for several years with Dorotheus in the desert. He visited the Desert of Scetis around 390. In 400, he met with St. Jerome in Bethlehem. St. John Chrysostomus consecrated him as Bishop of Helenopolis. He died in 431.

(4) *Cf.* Amélinau, *Histoire des Monastères de la Basse-Egypte, vies des Saints Paul, Antoine, Macaire, Maxime et Domèce, Jean le Nain,* 46-202.

(5) *Cf.* p. 125.

dwelling at this place, and build a church, for certainly after a while, a number of people will inhabit this place."[6] This church, then, with the cells around it, formed the nucleus of the present monastery. This means that the monastic community of Abû Maqâr was founded prior to the death of the Saint in 390 A.D.[7]

In spite of the community that grew up around him, St. Macarius remained throughout his life an anchorite. He lived in one of the cells connected by a tunnel to a small cave. "He dug out a passage in his cell which was about twenty measures in width and he made from it a tunnel of considerable length from his cell to the distance of half a mile, at the place where the passage came to an end, he made above the end of it a small cave."[8]

When the Arian persecution began in 374 A.D. with an edict by the Emperor Valens[9] commanding the Orthodox to be expelled from Alexandria and the rest of Egypt, St. Macarius the Great and others were banished to an island.[10] A few years later, however, he is reported to have returned to the Desert of Scetis. Serapion in his *Life of Macarius* relates that at the death of the Saint, "the monks came from their cells and threw themselves upon his holy body ... and placed his holy body in a cave near the church which he had built."[11] Though the Saint had bidden his disciples to hide his body, "people from Chechouir, his country, came and gave to his disciple John the gold which was forbidden for him to love, and he showed them the tomb of the Saint. They took him to the town and built a church in his memory, where he remained buried for about 170 years, (probably 270 years) until the time of the domination of the Arabs, (and) after the construction of the cells, when they removed the body. As to his disciple John, because of his love for wealth,[12] he was attacked by

---

(6) Amélinau, *op. cit.*, 89.

(7) Amélinau, *op. cit.*, 86. f.

The monastic community of St. Macarius is referred to in this volume as the Monastery of St. Macarius, the Monastery of Abû Maqâr, or the Dair Abû Maqâr.

(8) Palladius, *op. cit.*, 116.

(9) Valens (364-378 A.D.), East Roman Emperor was baptized by Eudoxus, the Arian Bishop of Constantinople.

(10) Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 241-2; Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, 271.

(11) Amélinau, *op. cit.*, 111.

(12) "And when much time had passed by, Macarius looked and said unto him that had ministered unto him — now his name was John, and afterward he became the elder in the place of the blessed man— he answered, I say, and said unto him, "Hear me, O John, and receive the rebuke with which I rebuke thee. For thou art suffering temptation, and behold the spirit of the love of money tempteth thee." Palladius, *op. cit.*, 114.

elephantiasis[13] after the death of our father Macarius."[14]

After the death of the great Saint, Paphnutius became his undisputed successor.[15] This is stated by Anbâ Pshoî in his *Life of the Greek Saints Maximus and Domitius*: "Abba Paphnutius the disciple of Abba Macarius became the father of Scetis after him..."[16] and Serapion considers Abba Paphnutius the greatest of the disciples of this saintly person. There seems to be sufficient evidence to assume that the hegoumenos of Dair Abû Maqâr was also considered by the monks as the Father of Scetis. Abba Paphnutius, who was born sometime between 301 and 311 A.D., became a follower of St. Antony, and consequently retired to the desert where he succeeded St. Isidore and St. Macarius. It is said that he could expound the Old Testament and the New Testament without reading from them.[17]

Before his election, Anbâ Kîrillus, the 24th Patriarch, had dwelt for five years in the monasteries in the Desert of St. Macarius while reading the books of the Old and New Testaments for Anbâ Tawfîlus (Theophilus) (385-412 A.D.).[18]

As mentioned elsewhere,[19] the monastic communities of Scetis suffered severely from three attacks by hordes of Berbers in the first half of the fifth century. The third sack of the monasteries is associated with the martyrdom of the forty-nine monks of Abû Maqâr. The monks of the monastery, who consider themselves as the custodians of the spirit of perseverance and of the relics of the Forty-nine Martyrs, relate the following tradition.

The third sack occurred in 444 A.D. At that time, one of the monks, Anbâ Yûânnis, invited the brethren of the monastery to share with him the glories of martyrdom, and while some of the fathers withdrew to the keep,[20] the others gladly submitted themselves to the swords of the invading Berbers. At that time a certain migaster[21] had been sent by the king[22] to ask for the prayers of the monks for the presumptive heir. As the visitor witnessed the bloody massacre, he was overcome by a vision in which he saw the Cherubim taking the souls of the martyrs to heaven. Thereupon he decided to join the martyrs and be slaughtered for Christ the King.

---

[13] *Elephantiasis Graecorum* or leprosy had been common from the earliest historical times in the delta and valley of the Nile.

[14] Synax., *Patr. Orient.*, XVI, 258-264 et 220-2.

[15] Palladius states that John became the elder after the death of Macarius. This does not necessarily mean, however, that he became the father of the Monks of Scetis. Palladius, *op. cit.*, 114.

[16] Amélinau, *op. cit.*, 312.

[17] Palladius, *op. cit.*, 175-180.

[18] Hist. Pat., *Patr. Orient.*, I, 428.

[19] *Cf.* p. 130.

[20] As Evelyn White points out, this tradition is the first record that gives evidence of the existence of the keep or qasr in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 166-7.

[21] The word "migaster" is due to some misunderstanding. The person's name was actually Dios or Abadios, but his function was that of a courier or *magistrianus*.

After the Berbers had completed their devastations,[23] they moved on to the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî where they are said to have washed the blood from their swords. Thus the water of the well was blessed by the blood of the martyrs, and many people who drank from it were relieved from diseases and suffering.

Those fathers of Dair Abû Maqâr who had escaped the massacre took the martyrs and buried them in a cave near the monastery. Only later were the bodies removed into the Church of St. Macarius.

The *History of the Patriarchs* mentions a fourth devastation of Scetis.[24] Again, this event is intimately linked to one of the great ascetes of the Monastery of St. Macarius.

Apparently, the Berbers considered the desert monks easy prey, for we read that Anbâ Danîâl was taken prisoner by them altogether three times. Once he was ransomed. The second time he was able to escape from captivity. The third time he secured his freedom by killing his captor. For his administrative and organizational qualities he was elected hegoumenos of the Monastery of St. Macarius at a time when the Emperor Justinian attempted to impose upon the monks of Scetis the "Tome of Leo." [25] Courageously, Anbâ Danîâl resisted this attempt, and, consequently, was driven from the monastery and found refuge at Tambuk, a village in the Delta. After the death of the Emperor Justinian in 565 A.D., the Saint returned to his monastery.

---

(22) Theodosius II (408-450 A.D.), son of Arcadius was Emperor of the East. Among the chief events during his administration may be mentioned the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, II, 414 f.

(23) There is no evidence of a complete devastation of the monasteries, for monasticism was still alive in Scetis after the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 167.

(24) Hist. Patr., *Patr. Orient.*, I, 473-4.

(25) The *Tome of Leo* is the letter sent by Pope Leo I to Flavian, Patriarch of Constantinople, on June 13th 449 A.D. In it, St. Leo expounds the Christological doctrine of the Latin Church, according to which Jesus Christ is One Person in Whom are Two Natures, the Divine and the Human, permanently united though unconfused and unmixed. Each of these exercises its own particular faculties, but within the unity of the Person. This was given formal authority by the Council of Chalcedon (451) as the classical statement of the Catholic doctrine of the Incarnation : 'Peter has spoken through Leo.'

Not long afterwards a new raid was carried out by the Berbers, sometime around 570-573 A.D.,[26] which resulted in a more complete destruction of the churches and monasteries of Scetis. The monks were scattered. Abûnâ Tawdrûs (Theodorus) fled to Terenuthis, Abûnâ Irenaeus to Gaza, and Abûnâ Mârkallûs (Marcellus) who had remained in Scetis was sold into slavery in Pentapolis.[27]

2. The Council of Chalcedon and the Story of St. Hilaria.

In order to understand why the Church of Egypt separated from the greater part of Christendom, we must retrace some of the steps that led to this unfortunate event. By reason of the decision of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D., the Egyptian Church was, out of loyalty to her Patriarch, forced to withdraw from the rest of Christendom. In 448 A.D., Eutyches (380-456 A.D.), archimandrite of a monastery in the vicinity of Constantinople, had been deposed by Flavian, the Patriarch of Constantinople, because of his zealous adherence to the doctrines of Apollinarius. Eutyches denied that the manhood of Christ was consubstantial with ours, a view which went far towards rendering our redemption through Him impossible. He also maintained that there were "Two Natures before, but only One after the Union" in the Incarnate Christ. A Council was called to meet at Ephesus in 449 A.D. Here Chrysaphius, the all-powerful eunuch of the palace of Theodosius II, was determined to right the wrong with the help of his supporter Dioscorus, Patriarch of Alexandria (444-454 A.D.). Eutyches was temporarily reinstated and Flavian, Eusebius and Domnus, who were his chief opponents, were deposed. The proceedings of this assembly, however, were so disgraceful that the council has been nicknamed Latrocinium or the robbers' council.[28] At any rate, for the time being, the faith of Egypt prevailed. On the death of the Emperor Theodosius II, his sister Pulcheria ascended to the Imperial throne, and having executed without legal trial the eunuch Chrysaphius, she gave her hand to Marcian (450-457 A.D.) who displayed all his zeal for the imperial cause.

---

(26) *Cf.* p. 130.

(27) O'Leary, *The Saints of Egypt*, 121-2.

(28) The *History of the Patriarchs* mentions Dioscorus I only in a few lines. He endured severe persecution for the Orthodox Faith at the hands of Marcian and his wife, and they banished him from his see through the partial action of the Council of Chalcedon, and their subserviency to the will of the prince and his wife. But at that time the creeds were separated, and the sees were torn asunder, so that none was left to write histories of the patriarchs, and the practice of composing them was interrupted. In this way no biography of the holy Patriarch Dioscorus after his banishment has been found. Hist. Patr., *Patr. Orient.*, I, 443-4.

In 451 A.D., therefore, another Council was held at Chalcedon in which from the very beginning Anbâ Disqûrus (Dioscorus) was treated as if he were on trial. The deliberations of the Council resulted in a condemnation of Eutyches and the Patriarch Dioscorus was deposed, not for heresy, but because, though thrice summoned to appear at the Council, he refused to attend it. Later, Eutyches himself was excommunicated by the Egyptian Church for his erroneous beliefs.

To what an extent the monks at Scetis were troubled by the theological debates across the sea is difficult to determine. The tradition of one of the "woman monks,"[29] Hilaria the daughter of the Emperor Zeno (474-491 A.D.), serves as a link between the tragedy of Chalcedon and the Monastery of Abû Maqâr of Scetis. Zeno's name is associated with the publication of his *Henoticon* or "Instrument of Union" (482 A.D.).[30] Addressing the "monks and laity throughout Alexandria, Egypt, Libya and Pentapolis" he sought to find some compromise.[32] Maqrîzî [33] reports that the Emperor Zeno "brought every year to the

---

(29) The story of Hilaria is undoubtedly apocryphal. We find similarities to this story in the traditions of Pelagia who also assumed the male attire and travelled to Jerusalem, and of Marina who for forty years lived in a monastery. Only after her death was the secret of her sex discovered. Other well known examples are Eugenia, the daughter of Philip, prefect of Alexandria under Commodus. As a monk, Eugenia edified all and became hegoumenos of a monastery. Apollinaria was the daughter of the Emperor Anthemius. After visiting Palestine, she came to Alexandria, where she procured an Egyptian monastic habit and departed for Scetis. There she lived alone in the desert for some time and then attached herself to St. Macarius. Other woman-monks were Euphrosyne, Theodora and Anastasia. *Cf.* Drescher, *Three Coptic Legends,* 122 f. The practice of the so-called woman-monks was strongly condemned by the canons of the Council of Gangra in the 4th century, where we read : "If a woman, under pretense of asceticism shall change her apparel and, instead of a woman's accustomed clothing, shall put on that of a man, let her be anathema." Schaff, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series XIV, 87 f.

(30) For the text of the *Henoticon*, Evagrius, *History of the Church*, II, 14. 251-4.

(31) *Ibid.*

(32) The *Henoticon* was put forward in 482 to secure the union between the Monophysites and Chalcedonians. It condemned both Nestorius and Eutyches by its assertion that the Orthodox Faith was epitomized in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed together with the Twelve Anathematisms of St. Cyril of Alexandria. It omitted all reference as to the number of the "Natures" of Christ, and really made important concessions to Monophysitism. It was widely accepted in the East, but never countenanced in the West.

(33) Maqrîzî (1364-1442) served as deputy qâdî in Cairo, as teacher of tradition at the Mu'aiyadiyah madrasah and later in the al-Ashrafiyah and al Ikbaliyah madrasah in Damascus.

convent of Bû Maqâr what was wanted of corn and oil for the maintenance of those who lived in it."[34] There is no doubt, therefore, that the Emperor must have had some special concern for the Fathers of the Desert. This interest may be partly explained by the tradition of St. Hilaria, his eldest daughter.[35]

Profoundly influenced by the martyrdom of the Forty-nine Fathers of Scetis, St. Hilaria decided to enter the monastic life herself. Disguised as a courier she travelled to Alexandria, and from there to Scetis, where she was met by Anbâ Banfu (Pambo). In spite of her tenderness, she was admitted to the monastery, and was assigned to a cell. Because of feminine characteristics, for she had no beard, she soon became known as Hilary the Eunuch. It happened, that, in the meantime, her younger sister fell ill, and her father determined that she should travel to Egypt to visit her sister. When the princess and her company arrived in the desert, Hilaria the Eunuch was called and her sister was miraculously cured. On her return to Constantinople, the Emperor Zeno became much interested in the work of the monks at Scetis. Zeno, suffering himself from heart trouble, and thus being prevented from undertaking the long journey, inquired if the monk Hilaria might be sent to him. Disguised as a monk, Hilaria went to Constantinople and was introduced to the Emperor who asked why he had kissed the princess and shared his bed with her. St. Hilaria realized the serious predicament in which she was placed and disclosed her real identity to her father, requesting him to keep it secret. Out of gratitude for the healing of his younger daughter, the Emperor issued an edict "in favour of the monks of Scetis, granting to them each year 3,000 ardebs of wheat for the sacrifice of his daughter and six hundred measures of oil."[36]

In the *Synaxarium,* the Coptic Church commemorates Anbâ Yûânnis, the 29th Patriarch, who, much impressed by the Emperor Zeno, accepted the *Henoticon,* and reestablished communion with the See of Antioch. We read that "at this time the Emperor Zeno sent to the Monastery of Abû Maqâr vessels of corn, wine and oil and many riches to satisfy the needs of the monks."[37]

3. The Patriarchal Residence.

The Monastery of Abû Maqâr gained great importance during the middle of the sixth century, when it became the official residence of

---

(34) Malan, *A Short History of the Copts and their Church,* 60.

(35) Synax., *Patr. Orient.,* XI, 624.

(36) Synax., *Patr. Orient.,* XI, 636.

(37) Synax., *Patr. Orient.,* XVI, 354-5.

the Coptic Patriarchs of Alexandria. Maqrîzî reports the events leading up to the emigration of the Copts to the Monastery of Abû Maqâr.[38] The Copts were still in control of the Alexandrian See, when the Emperor Justinian, dissatisfied with the situation, ordered one of his governors, Apollinarius, and his troops to come to Alexandria. When Apollinarius arrived at the church in Alexandria he changed his military uniform, and put on the robes of a patriarch and conducted a service. The people, who were ready to stone him, compelled Apollinarius to withdraw. Then he collected his forces and pressed the inhabitants of Alexandria to accept the Melkite (the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon) faith. "O citizens of Alexandria, leave the teachings of the Jacobites, if not, I fear the Emperor will kill you and confiscate your belongings and your wives." But the people were ready to stone him. He notified his troops, and 200,000 people were killed, so that the soldiers waded in blood. Many of the people escaped to the monasteries of the Wâdî Habîb. The Melkites occupied the churches of the Copts, and the seat of the Patriarchs of the Copts was moved to the Monastery of Abû Maqâr.[39] Apparently, some monks of the Monastery of Abû Maqâr had even accepted the Melkite faith.[40] That this was merely a temporary accommodation is evident from the subsequent history of the monastery.

We read in the *History of the Patriarchs*, that Anbâ Butrus, a priest, was ordained Patriarch by three bishops at the Monastery of as-Zugag,[41] and that it was impossible for him to take up residence in Alexandria, "because they could not bring him into the city openly, through fear of the prince and Apollinaris, the Patriarch of the heretics." [42] In his *History of the Copts*, Maqrîzî states that after the death of Anbâ Sima'ân (Simon) II (830 A.D.), the Copts elected at the Monastery of Abû Maqâr as the 52nd Patriarch, Joseph, (831-849 A.D.) who reigned for eighteen years until he died.[43] Still, it is difficult to ascertain if there has been a continuous residence of the patriarchs at Dair Abû Maqâr as early as the sixth or seventh century. Maqrîzî in-

---

(38) The tension between the Coptic Church and the Byzantine Church and rulers was still due to the non-acceptance of the Chalcedonian Creed by the Egyptians.

(39) Wüstenfeld, *Maqrizi's Geschichte der Copten*, 44.

(40) *Ibid.*, 43.

(41) The famous Henaton Monastery at the ninth milestone from Alexandria *Cf.* Brecchia, *Alexandria ad Aegyptum*, 54.

(42) The patriarch resided outside of Alexandria, at a distance of nine miles, at the Church of St. Joseph, but the prince knew nothing of him. Hist. Patr., *Patr. Orient.*, I, 470.

(43) Wüstenfeld, *op. cit.*, 60.

forms us that the monastery preserved the privilege of recognition of the new patriarchs who, after being consecrated in Alexandria, were enthroned at the monastery.[44] The relationship between the monastery and the patriarchate was no doubt a very intimate one, as the history of the following centuries will show. Thus, Anbâ Makarîûs II (1102-1129) had been a priest of Dair Abû Maqâr before he was elected to be the patriarch. Unwilling to accept the high office, he pleaded his incompetence for it on the ground of being the off-spring of a second marriage.[45] In spite of protests, he was consecrated in Alexandria, after which he was allowed again "to take refuge in his beloved monastery." [46] A similar instance occurred in the case of Anbâ Ghabrîâl II (1131-1145), who also returned after his consecration to the monastery in order to be enthroned there as patriarch. [47]

4. The Centre of Ecclesiastical Prestige.

Returning to the seventh century, the rebuilt monasteries of Scetis were consecrated after the widespread devastations of the fourth Berber raid around 570-573 A.D.[48] The original Church of Abû Maqâr was abandoned, and a new church built where the Church of Abû Maqâr now stands. The consecration of the new church took place around 650 A.D. According to the report of this event given in detail in the *History of the Patriarchs*,[49] a delegation of monks from Dair Abû Maqâr came on the day of the Nativity to Alexandria to request the Patriarch Anbâ Banîâmîn I (622-661 A.D.) to consecrate their new church in the monastery. On his arrival, he was received by the young monks with palm branches in their hands, while the older monks "chanting like angels" carried smoking censers in their hands. During the rite of consecration the patriarch had a vision of a Seraph and of St. Macarius. Then he marked the sanctuary with the chrism, and he had a vision of the hand of Christ upon the walls anointing the sanctuary. Following the consecration of the church, Anbâ Banîâmîn was bidden, in a vision, to draw up the Canons for the monastery

---

(44) *Ibid.*, 110.

(45) Neale, *A History of the Holy Eastern Church*, II, 237.

(46) *Ibid.*

(47) No sooner was Anbâ Ghabrîâl II consecrated, than he was involved in a theological dispute with the monks of St. Macarius on the phraseology of the prayer. The monks objected to the phrase, that the Saviour, in taking flesh of his Blessed Mother, had made it one with his Divinity. The dispute was compromised by the addition of the words "without division, commixtion, or confusion." Neale, *op. cit.*, II, 243-4.

(48) *Cf.* p. 130.

(49) Hist. Patr., *Patr. Orient.*, I, 513-4.

regulating the conduct of the priests and monks. These Canons are as follows : [50]

1. No priest shall ascend to this sanctuary until he has put on his pallium first, before he carries the incense into the sanctuary.
2. No priest or deacon shall communicate therein until he has vested himself in the epomis or a pallium.
3. No priest or deacon shall speak in the holy dome any idle words, nor sit therein to read a book. And he that shall break that canon shall be anathema.
4. If any priest or monk shall enter into this dome, unless he be appointed for the service of this sanctuary, let him be anathema.
5. If any of the priests belonging to this place bring a strange priest from Misr or an official into this dome and holy tabernacle, for the sake of human glory, let him be anathema.
6. If any man shall persist in entering this holy dome, the Lord Jesus Christ shall cast him out.
7. And if any man transgresses in order that he may have a lot in this holy place by means of money or bribe, then let him, and everyone who assists him to enter it for the sake of human glory, be degraded, especially if he be notorious for evil and pride.

In addition to the efforts of Anbâ Banîâmîn in the reconstruction of the monasteries in Scetis, John the Hegumen played a major role, as is mentioned in the *Synaxarium* [51] and the *History of the Patriarchs.*[52]

John was born sometime between 585 A.D. and 605 A.D. After he had become a monk, he was captured three times by the Berbers who took him prisoner and made him a slave. Thus he shared in many ways the experiences of Anbâ Danîâl,[53] and Anbâ Samwîl of al-Qalamûn.[54] About 641 A.D., he became the hegoumenos of Dair Abû Maqâr and was instrumental in the rebuilding and restoration of the monasteries. That he was a man of deep spirituality is testified by the historian who said that "he never communicated of the Holy Mysteries without seeing the Lord and Saviour in his vision, with our Lady the Virgin, and great secrets were made manifest to him." [55] When John the Hegumen died in 675 A.D., he left his impress upon a group of disciples whom he himself had trained. Anbâ Abrâm of Scetis and Anbâ Girgis of Scetis were probably the two best known and most influential followers of John.

---

(50) *Ibid.*

(51) Synax., *Patr., Orient.*, III, 541-4.

(52) Hist. Patr., *Patr. Orient.*, V, 82.

(53) Hegoumenos of Dair Abû Maqâr.

(54) *Cf.* ch. Dair Anbâ Samwîl.

(55) Hist. Patr., *Patr. Orient.*, V, 82.

Anbâ Abrâm[56] was born around 608 A.D. His father was a wealthy man who had distinguished himself by his generosity towards the less fortunate. His mother, a God-fearing woman, had been carried away by the Persians. When Anbâ Abrâm was thirty-five years of age, he decided to retire to the Desert of Scetis, where he joined John the Hegumen. By the providence of God, Anbâ Abrâm met one day Anbâ Girgis.[57] This meeting established an intimate friendship between the two Saints, who were regarded with the highest esteem. The *History of the Patriarchs* informs us that "they walked in the way of the great Antony, and brought it to perfection."[58] Anbâ Girgis had been a simple shepherd before he became a monk. For ten years he had been a monk of the Monastery of Urion before he met Anbâ Abrâm. After the two disciples of John the Hegumen were so providentially led together, they settled in the Monastery of Abû Maqâr where they shared the cell of Anbâ Abrâm. The tomb of the two Saints still existed at the time of the compilation of the *Synaxarium* which was in the last quarter of the 12th century or the first half of the 13th century.[59]

The Monastery of St. Macarius remained for centuries the most important institution of the Desert of Scetis. The fact that the hegoumenos of the monastery was regarded by the monks as the "Father of Scetis" illustrates this point. Furthermore, the close relationship that this monastery had with the patriarchate during the reign of Emperor Justinian was another factor that contributed to the leading position of Dair Abû Maqâr.

Sometimes the internal history of al-Islâm was affected by the monasteries, as, for example, in the eighth century when during one of the more decisive moments in Islamic history, it was claimed that the prayers of the monks of Dair Abû Maqâr determined the fall of the Umayyad Dynasty.[60]

---

(56) Synax., *Patr. Orient.*, XVI, 393-4.

(57) Synax., *Patr. Orient.*, XI, 565-7.

(58) Hist. Patr., *Patr. Orient.*, V, 83.

(59) Burmester, "On the date and authorship of the Arabic Synaxarium of the Coptic Church." 253.

(60) At that time (period of persecution) we remained with the patriarch (Anbâ Mikhâîl I, 744-768 A.D.) ten days and ten nights in this fashion (being tormented) but when the deacon and reader of Bilbeis saw our distress he hastened away to the Monastery of St. Macarius and assembled all the holy fathers and monks, and they began to fast and pray in the church night and day, crying to the Lord Christ to look upon us, and to take away our misery and all that men were suffering by captivity and slaughter and pillage, and to put a stop to the lamentations of the old and the young. So the gracious God heard them, and raised up the Khorassanians (Abbasids) to help them... and they did not cease slaughtering them until they reached Wâdî Habîb in answer to the prayer of the saints. Hist. Patr., *Patr. Orient.*, V, 182-3.

During the reign of Marwân II (744-750 A.D.), the monks suffered severely under persecution. "They oppressed us even more cruelly, as they did to Ignatius, the saint and martyr, when they delivered him to the ten lions."[61] But Marwân's career was seriously endangered at this time by the Abbasids, and the victory of the Abbasids over the Umayyads brought a temporary end to the difficulties of the monks.[62]

The Monastery of St. Macarius, like the other monasteries of Scetis, was sacked for the fifth time during the patriarchate of Anbâ Murqus III (799-819 A.D.).[63] But soon after the destruction, the monasteries were rebuilt by James, a priest of the Monastery of Abû Maqâr. He had escaped the destruction by the Arabs, and had departed to a monastery in Upper Egypt, "while awaiting the time when he might return to the holy mountain of Mîzân al-Qulûb [64] or Wâdî Habîb." [65] After the death of Anbâ Murqus III, Anbâ Ya'qûb was elected by the monks to the patriarchate, and the work of restoration was begun. He sent messengers to all the fathers and to the cells saying : "If anyone need anything for his cell, let him come and take it." The monks responded gladly and returned to the desert. While still a priest, he also had begun to rebuild the sanctuary of St. Sinuthius (Shanûdah), which is to the south of the sanctuary of St. Macarius, and there the monks began to assemble, instead of in the ruined church.[66]

Anbâ Ya'qûb began work that was carried on during the reign of Anbâ Yûsâb (830-849 A.D.) by the oeconomus Sinuthius. The middle of the ninth century stands for "grace and peace." The monasteries in every place grew and increased in number, above all the monasteries of the Desert of Scetis which were "the Paradise of God", and especially that of St. Macarius. Abûnâ Shanûdah "raised monuments in honour of St. Macarius, vineyards and gardens and cattle and mills and oil-presses and many useful things that cannot be numbered." [67]

That the life in the Desert of Scetis was an attractive one is seen

---

(61) Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch and church father, was sent to Rome and condemned to the amphitheatre to fight the wild beasts. "Let me be given to the wild beasts, for through them I can attain unto God... entice the wild beasts that may become my sepulchre... Ignatius, *Rom.* 4-5. Hist. Patr., *Patr. Orient.*, V, 182.

(62) Marwân II was finally defeated at Busir, in the district of al-Ashmunain in Upper Egypt. Here the last Damascus caliph of the Umayyad dynasty fell fighting in 750 A.D.

(63) *Cf.* p. 131.

(64) Mîzân al-Qulûb, "Balance of hearts" and is derived from the Coptic word Shihêt, "Shi" in Coptic meaning 'measure' and "hêt", 'heart'.

(65) Hist. Patr., *Patr. Orient.*, X, 441.

(66) Hist. Patr., *Patr. Orient.*, X, 453.

(67) Hist. Patr., *Patr. Orient.*, X, 538.

by the large number of monks who entered the monasteries at that time. It is interesting to note that those who went to the Wâdî Habîb were not only those of the Orthodox Faith, "but also heretics, on account of the wonders that were manifested in that church." [68]

In addition to the ecclesiastical prestige that the monastery had enjoyed since the days of the Emperor Justinian, another factor contributed additional fame to the institution, especially after the beginning of the ninth century. For not only did the monastery become the centre of patriarchal activities, it also became the patriarchal necropolis. With the death of Anbâ Mîkhâîl II (849-851 A.D.), which is commemorated on the 20th of Barmûdah, this custom commences.[69] We read that the monks placed his body in the Church of Abû Maqâr, and that he received the crown with the Saints in the land of the living.[70]

Anbâ Mîkhâîl, or Khâîl II, was succceeded by Anbâ Quzmân II, (851-858 A.D.) of the Church of St. Macarius. His patriarchate began inauspiciously, for, on the feast of St. Menas, two men started a riot in the church, and one of them killed the other. Whereupon Anbâ Quzmân was imprisoned, and it was only later that he was permitted to live in the city of Damîrah, where none but Christians dwelt.[71]

The 55th patriarch, Anbâ Shanûdah (859-880 A.D.), who had served as oeconomus of the Monastery of St. Macarius, exercised his patriarchal office with great efficiency. "He built the church which is in the Monastery of Abû Maqâr and other churches," [72] and on the day following the Nativity of our Lord in 850 A.D., he was consecrated to the patriarchate. "...And they declared with one voice, swearing: There is none worthy of this degree, except the oeconomus of the Church of Abû Maqâr, and all of them said: Hagios, Hagios, Hagios." [73]

Doctrinal controversies, however, again disturbed the peace of the desert. In the second and third centuries a heresy arose which was termed Monarchianism. There were two kinds of this heresy, and the second kind, the Modalist or Sabellian heretics, were also termed Patripassians, as it was a corollary of their doctrine that the Father suffered as the Son.[74] A similar doctrine was held by some of the bishops in Upper Egypt in the 9th century, for "they said with their tongue which deserves to be cut and to be cleft, that the nature of the divinity died. They were all inhabiting a village of ã district in

---

(68) Hist. Patr., *Patr. Orient.*, X, 538.

(69) Synax., *Patr. Orient.*, XVI, 324.

(70) *Hist. Patr.*, II, I, 2.

(71) Neale, *op. cit.*, II, 155.

(72) *Hist. Patr.*, II, I, 19.

(73) *Ibid.*, 20.

(74) Newman, *A Manual of Church History*, I, 202.

Upper Egypt called al-Balyana."[75] The patriarch ordered these heretics to come to the Desert of Scetis. "Anbâ Shanûdah performed a good deed, in order that it might serve as a censure on the bishops and others and on everyone who errs from the faith, in that he caused the bishops of Upper Egypt to stand up in the midst of the congregation of the fathers, the saintly monks, in the Church of Abû Maqâr on the Sunday of the Holy Easter, and they made an obeisance (metanoia) to the congregation and asked them and besought them to pray for them and to pardon them for what Satan had done to them through temptation." [76]

By the beginning of the tenth century, monasticism in the Desert of Scetis may well have reached its height. Anbâ Ghabrîâl (910-923 A.D.) came from the Monastery of Abû Maqâr. The *Synaxarium*[77] and Renaudotius[78] inform us, that, tempted by a multitude of desires of the flesh, he was assisted by the older monks in the mastery of his weaknesses. Having spent most of his life in the desert, he was buried like his predecessor in the Monastery of Abû Maqâr. [79]

After the death of Anbâ Quzmân III (in 932 A.D.), Anbâ Makarîûs I (932-952) A.D.) ascended the patriarchal throne. He came from the township of Shubrâ, and entered the Monastery of St. Macarius. He died on the 24th of Baramhât in 953 A.D.[80]

During the tenth century there were rather cordial relations between the Muslims and the desert monks. Abû Sâlih records [81] that, during the reign of al-'Azîz, a scribe, Shaikh Abû 'l-Yumn Quzmân ibn Mînâ, donated to the monastery the sum of 2,000 dinars before his departure to Syria. Apparently, some Muslims had a high esteem for the Patriarch Anbâ Afrâm (Ephraem) (975-978 A.D.) and the power of the prayers that were offered by the monks. It was also during the reign of al-'Azîz that "the Orthodox people" by their threefold *Kyrie eleison* moved "part of the Muqattam hills which is near the hill of al-Kabsh, between Cairo and Misr." [82] The last days of Anbâ Afrâm's reign were greatly troubled by a certain Abû as-Surûr, a Copt of great influence who persisted in retaining a number of concubines, after having been admonished by the patriarch of his sin. On account of his excommu-

---

(75) *Hist. Patr.*, II, I, 31.

(76) *Ibid.*

(77) Synax., *Patr. Orient.*, XI, 836.

(78) Renaudotius, *Historia Patriarchorum Alexandrinorum Jacobitarum*, 328 f.

(79) *Hist. Patr.*, II, II, 118.

(80) Synax., *Patr. Orient.*, XVI, 251-5, *Hist. Patr.*, II, II, 121.

(81) Abû Sâlih, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and some neighbouring countries*, 118.

(82) *Ibid.*

nication by the patriarch he revenged himself by poisoning Anbâ Afrâm.

Anbâ Fîlûtâûs (979-1003), became the successor of Anbâ Afrâm, who was known as the Syrian merchant. During the reign of Anbâ Fîlûtâûs (Philotheus), a certain Anbâ Bafnûtîûs lived at Dair Abû Maqâr for 35 years before he was consecrated by Anbâ Fîlûtâûs to a bishopric. The *Synaxarium* says that during his episcopacy, which extended from 980 to 1006, he never changed his garments, except for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.[83] That the monastery supplied numerous ecclesiastical leaders is evident from the appointment and consecration of a monk, Danîâl, as the Metropolitan of Abyssinia.[84]

Anbâ Fîlûtâûs was followed by Anbâ Zakharîâ, the 64th patriarch. During his patriarchate Anbâ Mînâ, the Bishop of Tânah, divided the revenues which he had collected into four parts and buried them in four different places. Anbâ Mînâ had a brother, Anbâ Makarîûs, who was Bishop of Upper Minûf and secretary of the synod. When Anbâ Mînâ felt that he was about to die, he sent messengers to his brother so as to inform him about the hidden treasures. But Anbâ Makarîûs was slow in coming and Anbâ Mînâ wrote four pieces of paper on which he mentioned the four places where the money was hidden. When Anbâ Mînâ was in agony and being troubled "he cast one of the four pieces into his mouth and chewed it up.... then he chewed up the second piece of paper and.... likewise the third. As he was about to chew the fourth piece of paper, his brother, Anbâ Makarîûs arrived. Anbâ Mînâ brought out the piece of paper from his mouth and delivered it to his brother." [85] After Anbâ Mînâ had died, Anbâ Makarîûs found according to the paper the place where the 10,000 dinars were hidden, and he took the money and built with it a skene [86] in the name of Abba Macarius in Wâdî Habîb. It is the beautiful sanctuary to the

---

(83) Synax., *Patr. Orient.*, XVI, 373. The disregard for the body, its cleanliness and care, was due to a dualistic philosophy which considered the body as an aspect of matter, and therefore essentially bad. St. Antony never bathed his body in water, nor did he as much as wash his feet or even allow himself to put them in water without necessity, and St. Ammon, who never saw himself naked, justified his attitude by saying : "It does not become a monk to see his own person exposed," and the Blessed Evagrius said : "From the time that I entered the desert I have never washed, and I have never eaten any vegetable, or any fruit, or any grapes." St. Jerome felt, that cleanliness of the body was a pollution of the soul, and said "who is once washed in the Blood of Christ, need not wash again."

(84) Renaudotius, *op. cit.*, 382.

(85) *Hist. Patr.*, II, II, 178-9.

(86) A skene is the dome of a church, but the term may also be used for the space beneath the dome, also used for the place of the singers and readers in front of the sanctuary.

south of the haikal of Benjamin. The *History of the Patriarchs* informs us that he spent 3,000 dinars, and gave a great sum in alms.[87]

In the beginning of the 11th century, the Monastery of Abû Maqâr gained in prominence, especially during the widespread and violent persecutions of al-Hâkim (996-1021). Anbâ Zakharîâ (Zacharias) as well as most of the bishops found refuge in the Desert of Scetis. It was at that time that a Turkish amîr obtained the head of the father, the preacher, "my Lord Mark the Evangelist." On learning that the Christians would pay a large sum of money for it, he took the head to Cairo and sold it for 300 dinars to a certain Buqairah al-Rashîdî who carried it to the patriarch at the Monastery of St. Macarius.[88]

Anbâ Zakharîâ (Zacharias), after having faced the persecution of his church, imprisonment and torture, after having been cast to the lions[89] and saved by the grace of God, went to rest in peace. He was followed by Anbâ Shanûdah II (1032-1046) who had become a monk at the age of fourteen in the skene of Anbâ Makarîûs. He was a native of Tilbânat 'Adî and a man of great learning. It is interesting to note that, in addition to the bishops, also the superiors of Wâdî Habîb decided on the successor of Anbâ Zakharîâ. The *History of the Patriarchs* informs us "that the bishops and the superiors of the Wâdî Habîb sat down to think about the people whom they might select to consecrate one of them."[90] It is quite likely that because of the many services rendered by the monastery during the persecution of al-Hâkim, special privileges were granted to the monks. One of those privileges may well have been their right to participate in the nomination and election of the patriarch. Four distinct bodies took part in the election, the bishops, the clergy of Cairo (or Alexandria), the notables of Cairo (or Alexandria), and the superiors of the Wâdî Habîb.[91] Many historical factors contributed to a close relationship between the monasteries, especially the Dair Abû Maqâr, and the patriarch, and it is only understandable that this close tie should produce some fruits in terms of rights and privileges for the Desert Fathers.

The monks of the Monastery of Abû Maqâr observed a custom of reserving the consecrated Elements from Palm Sunday to the Wednesday of Holy Week. When Anbâ Akhristûdulûs visited the monastery he abolished the practice, threatening to anathematize those who should

---

(87) *Hist. Patr.*, II, II, 179.

(88) *Hist. Patr.*, II, II, 201.

(89) *Cf.* p. 173.

(90) *Hist. Patr.*, II, II, 229.

(91) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 349. Burmester, *The Rite of Consecration of the Patriarch of Alexandria.*

do it afterwards. This was done in the presence of an assembly of the bishops.[92]

During the patriarchate of Anbâ Akhristûdulûs many miracles are reported. One of these miracles occurred at the Monastery of Abû Maqâr, where the icon of Abû Mînâ, situated in the skene of the Church of Abû Maqâr, exuded blood.[93]

Some interesting statistics and figures about the strength of the desert monasteries in the Wâdî Habîb are related by the Qummus Armânîûs as quoted by 'Umar Tûssûn.[94] Armânîûs offers the following numbers for the period of the patriarchate of Anbâ Akhristûdulûs (1047-1077). The Monastery of Abû Maqâr was still by far the most important monastery in the Desert of Scetis, claiming more than 50% of the total number of monks.

The Monastery of Abû Maqâr	400
The Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî	40
The Monastery of St. John the Short	150
The Monastery of St. John Kame	25
The Monastery of the Virgin of al-Barâmûs	60
The Monastery of al-Barâmûs	2
The Monastery of the Syrians	60
	737

The Monastery of Abû Maqâr, as pointed out above, served as a patriarchal residence on and off from the days of the Emperor Justinian in the sixth century. Furthermore, one of the functions of the patriarch has always been the consecration of the Holy Chrism which is used at Christmation in the Rite of Holy Baptism and likewise in the Service for the Consecration of Churches.[95] The Rite of the Consecration of the Holy Chrism was regularly performed at the Monastery of St. Macarius, from the early Middle Ages at varying intervals of time, according to requirements.

However, the flourishing period of desert monasticism had passed. In 1088, Mawhub, a deacon of Alexandria, journeyed to the Monastery of Abû Maqâr in the "holy Wâdî Habîb." At that time, there was an important number of Coptic notables staying at the monastery, for he met "the deacon Abba Habîb Mîkhâîl of Damanhûr, Anbâ Kîrillus II, the 67th Patriarch, and with him three bishops, Anbâ Ghabrîâl of al-Buhairah, Anbâ Ibrâhîm of Dibkwa, and Anbâ Khâîl of Nusa. Of

---

(92) *Hist. Patr.*, II, III, 262.

(93) *Ibid.*, 302.

(94) Omar Tousson, *Etude sur le Wadi Natroun*, 27.

(95) Butler, *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt*, II, 21 f.

the 700 monks whom he found, 400 belonged to the Monastery of St. Macarius.[96] If this figure is compared with those of previous ages, the steady decline in the number of monks is very noticeable. It is reported that in the middle of the sixth century, a monk named John of Petra lived in the Desert of Scetis, where he "counted" 3,500 fathers.[97] In the ninth century, Epiphanius Hagiopolites visited the Monastery of St. Macarius, and he came to the conclusion that the monastery contained a thousand monks and a thousand cells.[98] That some of these figures are exaggerated seems to be quite likely, especially, when one reads of the 70,000 monks who saluted ʻAmr ibn al-Asî on his return from Alexandria,[99] or the 50,000 monks who greeted the two Macarii on their return from exile.[100]

The large number of monks at the Monastery of Abû Maqâr must have demanded a large supply of food and goods. In this connection it is interesting to note that Anbâ Kîrillus II dedicated "what he was wont to receive from certain sees to the Monastery of Saint Abba Macarius and they were : Damîrah, Abûsîr, Banâ, Damanhûr and al-Ihnâsîâh."[101]

After the death of Anbâ Kîrillus II in 1902, Anbâ Mîkhâîl IV (1091-1102) was elected patriarch, and like his predecessors, proceeded to the Monastery of Abû Maqâr to be enthroned. His successor was Anbâ Makârîûs II (1103-1129) who had been a monk at St. Macarius' Monastery before becoming patriarch. He was consecrated in Alexandria and his enthronement took place in the Church of al-Muʻallaqah in Old Cairo.[102] Anbâ Makârîûs II was succeeded by Anbâ Ghabrîâl ibn Turaik[103] (1131-1145), who had passed much of his life as a layman in the Government service. He was noted for his deep spirituality and honesty. It is said, that Ghabrîâl, during his sixteen years' reign, consecrated no fewer than fifty-three bishops, and that he refused in every case to accept the presents offered. He issued many new canons and laws.

In this connection it might be interesting to mention that there is some evidence that by the middle of the 12th century the Monastery

---

(96) *Hist. Patr.*, II, II, 241.

(97) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 258.

(98) The visit of Epiphanius Hagiopolites took place between 800 and 810 A.D. His observations are described in his Διήγησις, *Epiphanii Monachi*, ed. Dressel, 6.

(99) *Ibid.*, II, 268.

(100) Synax., *Patr. Orient.*, XVI, 222.

(101) *Hist. Patr.*, II, III, 331.

(102) Synax., *Patr. Orient.*, I, 231.

(103) Synax., *Patr., Orient.*, XVI, 300.

of Abû Maqâr had developed a "use"[104] and it is likely indeed that the other monasteries in Scetis followed this example by establishing their respective local "uses".[105]

5. From the 12th to the 16th Century.

During the patriarchate of Anbâ Ghabrîâl II (1131-1145), a discontented monk named Halus, who was the steward of the revenue derived from the chrism, went to al-Hâfiz and blackmailed his fellow monks. Thereupon, he received from the government the authority to search the Monastery of Abû Maqâr for a treasure that was alleged to be hidden there. His search was a very costly affair, for, among other things, he burned the screen of the haikal of Benjamin. It was said that he kicked the screen with his feet in his scorn and pride, and therefore God struck him in his foot with a malignant corrosive ulcer.[106]

During this period, there is evidence of a temporary habitation or visit of some Syrian monks, who may have come from the Syrian Monastery. A graffito in the Church of St. Michael in the qasr of the monastery reads : "Remember, O Lord, thy servant the weak and sinful Elias, in name a monk and priest from the country of Marde, and the Syrian monk Habirb, and .... in the holy dwellings of Anbâ Makârîûs and his .... these were in the year 1507 of Jarvani."[107] A further graffito testifies to the visit of a Patriarch of Antioch, Mâr Ignatius.[108]

The successor of Anbâ Ghabrîâl was a monk of the Monastery of Abû Maqâr, who became known as Anbâ Mîkhâîl V, and who had distinguished himself for his regular life and accurate observance of the monastic discipline, but who was so ignorant that he could neither read nor write any Coptic or Arabic. After only three months of office, he was poisoned by one of the monks of the same monastery.[109]

During the patriarchate of Anbâ Yûânnis VI (1189-1216) there was in the Monastery of St. Macarius a monk who apostatized, and gained a livelihood as a government secretary. Touched with remorse, he presented himself before al-Malik al-Kâmil I (1218-1238)[110] and

---

(104) A "use" is a local modification of the standard rite.

(105) For a detailed discussion of the liturgical practices, *cf.* Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 374-9.

(106) *Hist. Patr.*, as quoted by Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 377, III, 38.

(107) This date corresponds to 1196.

(108) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, III, 76. This patriarch was with great probability Anbâ Ignatius XI (1484-1493) who is known for having visited the Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn.

(109) Neale, *op. cit.*, II, 249.

(110) Al-Malik al-Kâmil, after the death of al-Adil, was left with the difficult task of clearing Egypt of the Crusaders who had landed near Damietta. It was in 1211 during the siege of Damietta that St. Francis of Assisi ap-

requested his permission to re-embrace Christianity, adding that if this were refused, he would gladly suffer martyrdom. The sultan granted his request, and the monk returned to the monastery where he gave himself up to the practice of penance.[111]

After the death of Anbâ Yûânnis VI in 1216, the Alexandrian See remained vacant for 18 years. It was during this period in 1228 that we hear of Sultan al-Malik al-Kâmil's visit to the Monastery of Abû Maqâr. The monks entertained him and his suite to the best of their ability, and he, in return, bestowed upon the monks large stores of provisions which consisted of 330 ardebs of corn, 200 of meal, 60 of beans, and as many of peas. In addition, he granted several privileges to the monastery. He exempted the monks from paying tribute, and he removed the Muslim officials belonging to the treasury who had been living in the monastery.[112] Interesting and significant for us is the complaint of the monks because of their lack of a patriarch. Eighty priests, they said, formerly had been members of their monastery, but this number was reduced to a mere four. Furthermore, the monks' concern reveals that they expected the patriarch to be elected from their own monastery.[113]

The patriarchate of Anbâ Kîrillus III (1235-1243), also known as Dâûd ibn Laqlaq, was important. The patriarch visited the monasteries in the Wâdî Habîb [114] and then declared them to be "patriarchal", that is, he considered them exempt from the jurisdiction of the diocesan bishop, and placed them under direct control of the patriarchate. The reactions of the monks at Dair Abû Maqâr showed evidence of insubordination to the demands of the patriarch. In Holy Week of 1237, the monks staged a revolt against their spiritual leader which was put down by the redeeming and conciliatory influence of Yûsâb ibn al-Muhabrak, Bishop of Fuwah. [115]

Some forty years after the visit of Sultan al-Malik al-Kâmil, the Bahri Mamluk Sultan, Baibars I (1260-1277) visited at-Tarânah, and

---

proached and challenged the Sultan to become a Christian. Neale, *op. cit.*, II, 385-6. Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages*, 219, f.

(111) Neale, *op. cit.*, II, 280.

(112) There was a widespread practice of appointing Muslims as supervisors or guardians of Christian shrines. From 1244 until the present day the doors of the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem are guarded by two Muslim families, one of whom keeps the key, while the other has the right of opening the doors.

(113) Neale, *op. cit.*, II, 296.

(114) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 387.

(115) Graf, *Gesch. d. christl. arab. Lit.*, IV, 369.

afterwards the Valley of the Wâdî Habîb where he dwelt in the monasteries. From there he proceeded further to Teroudjeh and Hammat and finally to Aqabah.[116]

Between the years 1346 and 1350, Fr. Niccolo di Poggibonsi visited both Alexandria and Cairo, and though he did not visit the Monastery of St. Macarius, he mentioned that it was situated four miles from the castle of Pharaon. At the time of his stay in Egypt, the monastery was still the leading monastic centre, for we hear that it was both large and beautiful.[117]

During the patriarchate of Anbâ Butrus V (1340-1348), Egypt, like Europe, was visited by the terrible plague, the *Black Death,* and whole families were exterminated. Maqrîzî declares that 15,000 persons died in Cairo on one day, and there is no doubt that the monasteries were severely affected by the catastrophe. Anbâ Butrus, who had succeeded Anbâ Banîâmîn II in 1340, died in 1348 and Anbâ Murqus IV was elected. After the *Black Death*, a pestilence ravaged Egypt in 1353, and people who had survived the former, fell victim to the latter. These events are quite clearly reflected in the picture drawn by Maqrîzî in the middle of the 15th century. The Monastery of St. Macarius is given by far the largest space in his description of the churches and monasteries in the Wâdî Habîb. "The most famous of the monasteries," Maqrîzî records, "is that of Abû Maqâr, and in front of it are the ruins of a great number of monasteries.... It is told that 1,500 monks used to stay there, though now only a few of them remain. — There are altogether three Maccarii : the eldest one, to whom the monastery belongs, Abû Maqâr of Alexandria, and Abû Maqâr the bishop. Their decayed bones are in three wooden tubes, and the Christians of the monastery honour them. In it is also the letter which 'Amr ibn al-'Asî wrote to the monks of the Wâdî Habîb regarding the collection of the tax... Abû Maqâr the elder adopted the monastic life from St. Antony, who was the first to wear the monastic robe... He (St. Macarius) met St. Antony in the Eastern mountain, where is the Monastery of al-'Arabah, and he remained with him for some time. Then he clothed him with the monastic garment, and ordered him to travel to the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn..."[118]

One of the last of the 15th century travellers to visit the Monastery of St. Macarius was Josse van Ghistele, who from 1481 to 1484 vi-

---

(116) Quatremère, *Histoire des Sultans Mamlouks de l'Egypte,* I, 246.

(117) Niccolo di Poggibonsi, *Oltramare*, in Golubovich, *Biblioteca Bio-Bibliografica della Terra Santa,* V, cap. 165-169.

(118) Wüstenfeld, *op. cit.,* 110.

sited Egypt. "We lodged in a village called Alterana (at-Tarânah), because one of our servants told us that in the neighbourhood there was the fine Monastery of St. Macarius, which merited the trouble of being seen, and that the Sultan himself held it in great esteem. We passed the night in this village, and we were so well received there by the lord who commanded there, that he gave us on the next day three of his Mamluks to conduct us to the monastery.

"After having hired donkeys and mules, we set out for the Monastery of St. Macarius, which was a day's journey from there in the middle of an immense desert, infested by leopards, boars, wolves and other dangerous animals. This monastery has the size of that of Bandeloo in the country of Waes, but it is less well built. There is shown in front of the church a place where St. Macarius was accustomed to preach to the people, after he had come out from Armenia, to come to do penance in this place. The body of the Saint does not rest there, for it is recounted there, that he left this country, and that he passed through the West and died there. When the monks heard, that we were pilgrims coming from Ghent, a city where St. Macarius is buried and where his body is held in great veneration, they rejoiced exceedingly, and they gave us an excellent reception. They showed us a certain privilege, which this monastery possessed for the ringing of the bells. It is a piece of fine cloth coated over with dough, clear and shining as a mirror.[119] The signature of Muhammad, which is placed on this piece is nothing else than the impress of his hands, which he had previously dipped into ink." [120]

6. The 16th and 17th Century Travellers.

The first 16th century travellers to the Desert of Scetis were not much interested in the monastic life, and their remarks give us little or no information as to the state of the monasteries.

Leo Africanus (1491-1552) mentions the Monastery of St. Macarius only very briefly. "The third (the Monastery of St. Macarius) standest in the wilderness, to the west of Bulac. This is the monasterie which

---

(119) The Monastery of St. Catherine possesses also a firman which claims to have been issued by Muhammad and written by 'Alî. All religious groups have cooperated in the manufacture of false documents, which were supposed to have been issued by the Prophet. A firman, attributed to Muhammad (Cod. Arab. 210 b. München) refers to the privileges of Christians, especially of monks, and requests the monks to take care of the Mecca pilgrims. Moritz, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Sinaiklosters*, 5, 17, 22.

(120) Saint-Génois, *Les Voyageurs Belges en XIII-XVII siècle*, 169-170.

in some histories is called Nitrie, and I thinke, bicause in that quarter the waters of Nilus being thickned by the heate of the sun in low places, are conuerted into salt and niter." [121]

Not much more information is provided by Pierre Belon du Mans, who visited Egypt in 1537. [122] An anonymous Spanish Franciscan, visiting Egypt in 1553, merely points out that the Monastery of St. Macarius is 100 miles from Cairo, and contains the body of the Saint.[123]

As in the case of Pierre Belon du Mans, it is questionable if Le Sieur de Villamont, who was in Egypt in 1590, ever saw the Desert of St. Macarius. He writes, however, that in the vicinity of it one finds the aquiline stones which are helpful for the delivery to women in labour.[124]

In the last decade of the 16th century, there was correspondence between Pope Clement VIII and Anbâ Ghabrîâl VIII, Patriarch of Alexandria. The Pope had sent his legate, Girolamo Vecchitti, to the Patriarch in the endeavour to unite the Alexandrian See with the Latin Church. In response to the papal mission, the Patriarch commissioned two monks of the Monastery of Abû Maqâr and a deacon of Alexandria to return the courtesies. In January 1595, the two monks, Abûnâ Yûsûf ibn Mikhâîl and Abûnâ 'Abd al-Masîh al-Makînî ibn Butrus, joined the Latin Church.[125]

To George Sandys, who visited Egypt in 1611, the Desert of St. Macarius was merely interesting because of a certain plant "low, leafless, brown in colour, branched like coral, and closed at the top : this in time of labour of women, they set in water, in some corner of the room, which strangely displayeth, procuring easy deliveries." [126] (This is the *Rose of Jericho, Anastatica Hierochuntia,* a plant which dries up, but when placed in water revives and becomes green.)

Another passing reference to the Monastery of St. Macarius comes from Fr. Eugene Roger, who mentions that the Ethiopians recognized as their sovereign Pastor the Patriarch of the Copts, who resides in Egypt at the Monastery of St. Macarius. Furthermore, he states, that the Patriarch had in Ethiopia a Patriarchal Vicar, whom they call Eteche or Comos, who has under him several bishops who are dispersed

---

(121) Brown, *The History and Description of Africa*, III, 1022.

(122) Belon du Mans, *Les Observations de plusieurs singularitéz*, 96.

(123) Luke, *A Spanish Franciscan's Narrative*, 61.

(124) Villamont, *Les Voyages*, III, xiii, 587.

(125) Graf, *op. cit.*, IV, 120.

(126) Sandys, *Travells*, 85.

throughout the province and who obey the Patriarch of the Copts.[127]

We know that the Monastery of St. Macarius has sheltered a considerable library since the Middle Ages. This privilege, no doubt, was partly due to the grant that the Emperor Zeno had bestowed upon the monastery.[128] Furthermore, the transfer of the patriarchal residence from Alexandria to the monastery in the sixth century may well have been another determinant for the accumulation of books. Though many of the ancient *MSS.* perished in the successive devastations of the monastery, we know that by the 10th and 11th centuries the library was restored again, and the growth of the collection would have continued had not the *Black Death* depopulated the Desert of Scetis. The library, however, remained intact until the 17th century, when European bibliophiles ventured to the Desert of Scetis to collect ancient *MSS.* for Continental collectors.

The first study and description of the monasteries and especially their libraries was presented to Nicholas Claude Fabri de Peiresc, the French archaeologist and scholar, by Fr. Cassien of Nantes. In the *Correspondence de Peiresc avec plusieurs missionaires et religieux de l'ordre des Capucins, 1631-1637,* Fr. Apollinaire de Valence mentions, that Fr. Cassien visited all four monasteries in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, but that he saw only three libraries, since the key for the fourth library could not be found. He took notes on the greatest part of the books which he saw, among which he discovered a large Arabic volume, which was a commentary of St. John Chrysostomus on the Gospels. Furthermore, there were homilies attributed to St. Simeon Stylites, some books by St. Basil, St. Gregory the Theologian and others.[129]

In his desire to obtain as many volumes as possible, Peiresc, who in 1618 was made abbot of the Monastery of Guistres, used the services of many priests. Thus Pietro Gassendi informs us that Peiresc "conceived very great hopes of obtaining out of the East both Coptic and other rare books, when about the very same time (1633) that very good man Aegidius Lochiensis, a Capuchin, returned out of Egypt. For he, being received with great exultation by Peirescius,.... told him of rare books which were extant in divers convents and monasteries." [130]

---

(127) Roger, *La Terre Sainte ou Description topographique très particulière des Saints Lieux, et de la Terre de Promission*, 398.

(128) *Cf.* p. 167.

(129) Gravit, "Peiresc et les études coptes en France au XVIII siècles," 14.

(130) Simaika, *Catalogue of the Coptic and Arabic Manuscripts in the Coptic Museum*, xxxi.

Gilles de Loche (Lochiensis) saw 8,000 manuscripts in the monastery. Urged, probably, to follow up the clue given by Gilles de Loche, another Capucin, Agathange de Vendome, wrote to Peiresc from Cairo in 1634, that he was on the point of securing a manuscript of the Psalms at the Monastery of St. Macarius.[131] The most remarkable manuscript obtained by Fr. Agathangelus in the Monastery of Abû Maqâr, however, was the *Codex Barberianus Orientalis*, which is a polyglot psalter written in five columns in the following languages : Ethiopic, Syriac, Coptic, Arabic and Armenian. The manuscript was sent to Peiresc, but was captured on the way by pirates and taken to Tripoli, where it was bought back. Subsequently, it was lost again, but rediscovered in 1637 and bought for Cardinal F. Barberini by John Paul Lascarius.[132]

Collectors like Colbert and Coislin took away Syriac manuscripts from the neighbouring Dair as-Surîân, and may also have secured Coptic manuscripts from Dair Abû Maqâr.[133]

In 1638, the French consul at Damietta, Fr. J. Coppin, mentioned the Monastery of St. Macarius. Fr. Coppin commenced his essay by describing the situation of the Desert of Nitria and by giving credit to St. Macarius, after whom the desert was named.[134] At the time of his visit, only four monasteries were inhabited by the Copts, who followed the same rule as those mentioned in the description of his voyage to the Thebaid.[135] Apparently well acquainted with the way to the monasteries, he mentions the price of two piastres for a horse and four piastres for each "Cavalier" who accompanied the party, which, however, was to be paid in the presence of the Cachef.[136] The first mo-

---

(131) *Ibid.*

(132) Burmester, "Comptes Rendus", *Bull. Soc. Arch. Copte*, XIII, 206. In 1638, Agathangelus of Vendôme and Cassianus of Nantes went to Ethiopia. Agathangelus, who knew Arabic, had visited several Coptic monasteries and converted or believed he had converted one of the monks of the Monastery of St. Antony, Abûnâ Murqus, who in 1635, was sent by the Coptic Patriarch as Abûnâ to Abyssinia. It was he who denounced the Capuchins and thus was the cause of their execution. They were hanged at Gondar with the cords of their Franciscan habits. For four nights miraculous lights were reported to be seen above their bodies, and the king in terror ordered them to be buried. The cause of their beatification was begun in 1665, but was interrupted for two hundred years, until it was taken up again in 1887 by Cardinal Massaia. Finally, on January 7, 1905, the two martyrs were declared blessed by Pope Pius X. *Cf.* King, *The Rites of Eastern Christendom*, I, 522.

(133) Simaika, *op. cit.*, xxi.

(134) Coppin, *Relation des Voyages faits dans la Turquie, la Thebaide, et la Barbarie*, 343.

(135) *Cf.* p. 48.

(136) Coppin, *loc. cit.*

nastery which he discovered, after having left the village of Tarânah, was that of St. Macarius, where the body of the Saint and those of many other saints are buried. In the tower or the keep of the monastery were kept the provisions and the books of the monks which they valued so highly and with which they would not part on account of the "anathema" that would be pronounced upon them.[137]

That the Monastery of Abû Maqâr was quite frequently visited by Frenchmen in the middle of the 17th century is evident from the graffiti in the Chapel of St. Michael in the qasr. On the plaster of the north wall are scratched the names or initials of three seventeenth century visitors : Claud Durand 1640, M.M. 1640, and Anthoine Ba... 1644.[138]

It is very likely that during this period the Monastery of St. Macarius served as a training-school for Franciscan missionaries in the same manner as the Monastery of St. Antony. A letter sent on April 18, 1639, by Fr. Anthonius de Virgoletta to the *Propaganda* states that missionaries were to be sent either to the Monastery of St. Macarius or to the Monastery of St. Antony for the purpose of studying the Arabic language.[139]

In or around 1638, the Monastery of St. Macarius became a haven of refuge for Franciscus of Como. Franciscus, a member of the Dominican (?) order and prefect of the mission had been sent to Egypt to work with Marcus of Lucca for the union of the Copts with the Church of Rome. Pressure and persecution, however, led him to retreat to the Monastery of St. Macarius. In 1641, Franciscus became teacher of Arabic in Jerusalem and later custodian of the Terra Santa.[140]

In 1649, Le Sieur de la Boullaye le Gouz visited Egypt. He describes in his memoires the natron which then was exported to Rouen, where it was used by Norman linen manufacturers for bleaching. Though le Gouz mentions the Monastery of Abû Maqâr, there is no

---

(137) Coppin, *op. cit.*, 314. The practice of adding anathemas to sacred texts goes back at least to the 13th century. We read in a Gospel text of 1229, which was purchased by the priest Gabriel for the Church of the Angel Michael from the Monastery of St. Antony, that it should "not be sold or pledged or carried off from it to any other. And whoever takes it with the design of covetousness the Lord Jesus Christ shall give him no portion with Christ, either in this time or in the time to come. And Christ shall cause the Angel Michael to be charged with the punishment of him in this world and the next. Amen." *Cf.* Horner, *The Coptic Version of the New Testament*, xciii.

(138) A recent layer of plaster prevents one from reading the full names.

(139) Golubovich, *Biblioteca Bio-Bibliografica della Terra Santa...*, III. *Etiopia francescana*, I, 92

(140) Graf, *op. cit.*, IV, 180.

evidence that he visited it.[141]

In 1657, Thévenot described the "Desert of St. Macharius with its monasteries."[142] In his description of the Monastery of Abû Maqâr he said: "This is a very ancient Monastery, the walls are very high, but it is much decayed. There are many holy bodies in it, but only one of these approved of by the Church of Rome, to wit, that of St. Macharius, as also five or six altar tables of lovely marble. Within the precinct of this monastery, there is a kind of a big square Tower, into which you enter by a draw-bridge; and wherein there is a church, a well, and all that is necessary for the church, and the sorry sustenance of the Monks, who sometimes retreat into it. For when they find themselves abused, and pursued by stranger Arabs, they betake themselves to this kind of strong Hold, and pull up the draw-bridge after them, keeping there whatever they have of value in the monastery, especially all their books which they so esteem, that no monk dares to sell, or put out of the way any of them, under the pain of anathema. This monastery is the greatest, but also the most ruinous, and especially the church that seems to have been very fair in times past. There is no garden belonging to it, and the water which the monks drink is somewhat brackish."[143]

The library of the Dair Abû Maqâr was still the main point of attraction for the bibliophiles in Europe. A letter written on October 30, 1646 to the French Chancellor in Paris informs us of the great demand for the *MSS.* of Dair Abû Maqâr. "My consorts, the merchants of Egypt who are at Paris have told me that Your Grandeur desired to have the works of St. Ufreme (Ephrem) and the *MSS.* of the Dair Abû Maqâr and others which will be found in Egypt."[144] And Galland writing in 1679, listed among the books to be bought: "Try to have the books which are at the Monastery of St. Macarius in Egypt and at Mount Sinai in the hands of the monks who are very poor."[145]

In 1670, Goujon ventured to the great Desert, which was situated three or four days from Cairo, and which was sanctified by much

---

(141) Le Gouz de la Boullaye, *Les Voyages et Observations*, 384.

(142) Thévenot, *The Travels of Monsieur de Thévenot into the Levant*, I, 242.

(143) *Ibid.*, 243.

(144) Mazarin et Séguir, "Mission du P. Athanase à Constantinople, en Chypre et au Mont-Athos," Omont, *Missions Archéologiques Françaises en Orient aux XVII et XVIII siècles*, I, 11.

(145) Galland, "Mémoire des observations que l'on peut faire dans les voyages de Levant, remis à M. Galland, lors de son voyage, par M. Colbert," Omont, *op. cit.*, I, 207.

penitence of the Holy Anchorites of the early Church. The first monastery visited by Goujon was the Dair Abû Maqâr, where the monks showed him the relics which were kept in a sepulchre of stone with an iron grating. The second monastery, which impressed Goujon on account of its wealth, was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary and inhabited by twenty monks. From there, he went to the Monastery of St. George (Anbâ Bishoî) which had fallen into ruin, and which was inhabited by only a few monks.[146]

Around 1680, Fr. Marcus of Lucca visited the Dair Abû Maqâr where he spent eight months trying to persuade the monks to join the Catholic Church. But in spite of the persistent efforts by Fr. Marcus, the monks of Dair Abû Maqâr preserved their independence from the See of Rome.[147]

When Robert Huntingdon visited the monasteries in 1678 or 1679 he described the Monastery of St. Macarius as being the most ruinous of them all, and he found nothing worthy of mention in it except many manuscripts, such as a large volume of St. John Chrysostom in Coptic on parchment, a colossal (elephantinus) tome on St. Matthew, lections of the Church for the whole year in four volumes in Coptic and others.[148]

Thirty years later, in 1707, the papal librarian Elias Assemani went on the order of Pope Clement XI to the Desert of Scetis, where he secured a significant series of Syriac manuscripts.

When Fr. du Bernat, S.J., visited the Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn in 1710, the Monastery of Abû Maqâr was inhabited by only four monks. In the monastery he was shown the bodily remains of St. John the Short, though the monastery of the latter was completely ruined. All that he noticed, was the Tree of Obedience where once upon a time the Monastery of St. John the Short stood. Altogether, only 23 monks lived at that time in the four monasteries of the Desert of Scetis.[149]

Then, on the 5th of December 1712, Fr. Claude Sicard, S.J., accompanied by the hegoumenos of the Monastery of St. Macarius, visited the four monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. His first stop was at the village of Atrîs where he found a hospice for the solitaries

---

(146) Goujon, *Histoire et Voyage de la Terre Sainte*, 320.

(147) Orbis Seraphicus. *De Missionibus fratrum Minorum*, II, iii, IV, 252.

(148) *Huntingtoni epistolae*, ed. Smith, quoted by Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 421.

(149) Du Bernat, *Nouveaux Mémoires des Missions de la Compagnie de Jésus dans le Levant*, II, 33, f.

of the desert.[150] On the 7th of December he departed from Atrîs and reached the Monastery of St. Macarius just before sunset. He referred to the traditional fame of the desert by mentioning the travels of Paula and Melania, and the 5,000 monks that inhabited the holy places. Speaking about the Dair Abû Maqâr he was obviously much interested in the tower with the Chapel of St. Michael and the library which contained three or four chests of ancient Arabic or Coptic manuscripts.[151] At the time of his visit, the monastery was inhabited by the "prêtre religieux", a doorkeeper who was also a monk and two secular deacons. Apparently much impressed by the religious practices, he described how these monks after their office retire to their cells, where they prostrate themselves at the feet of their superior. The monastery contained two churches, a small one which was dedicated to St. Macarius, and a second one, much larger, but half ruined, which was dedicated to St. John. In the latter church he was shown a chapel dedicated to St. Apollinaria, the daughter of Anthemius, a consul during the reign of Arcadius. Furthermore, he was shown four small coffins, which, as the Copts say, contained the bodies of the three Macarii and St. John the Short.[152]

Seven years after the visit of Elias Assemani, another member of the Assemani family visited the monastery as an agent of the Vatican library, Joseph Simon Assemani (1687-1768), who was a Maronite of Mount Lebanon. After his college training in Rome, he was sent to Egypt and Syria to search for valuable manuscripts. On his first mission to Egypt and Syria, he secured 150 valuable documents. At the Monastery of Abû Maqâr "he acquired manuscripts of the highest quality written in the Coptic tongue," [153] the collection that is now in the Vatican. In gratitude for his exploits, the Pope conferred upon him the Titular Archbishopric of Tyre. On his visit to the Monastery of St. Macarius in 1715, Joseph Assemani was accompanied by Fr. Claude Sicard. The purpose of their visit, as mentioned above, was to secure books for the Vatican library. Fr. Sicard's judgment about their journey is well stated in one sentence. "Nous trouvâmes dans tous ces lieux un assez grand nombre de livres très rares." [154] There is no doubt that after the exploitative visits of the Papal Librarian, the monks began to re-examine their policy with regard to their manuscripts.

On September 18, 1729, Fr. François Sevin wrote a letter to Mau-

---

(150) Sicard, *Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses*, II, 175.

(151) *Ibid.*, 177.

(152) *Ibid.*, 179.

(153) Simaika, *op. cit.*, xxii.

(154) Sicard, *op. cit.*, III, 279.

repas in which he stressed the urgency to obtain manuscripts from the Monastery of St. Macarius. "Mr. Le Maire, the Consul of Tripoly in Syria, did not encounter the same obstacles, I add here a memorandum, which his excellency received these last days and in which he speaks with great praise about the libraries of the Monastery of St. Macarius. I think, as Mr. Le Maire, that the consul of Cairo would easily succeed in getting the books in question from the hands of the monks, who are so little worthy to possess them. A consul, who is clever and skilful, is a more suitable person for these undertakings, than the most scholarly man in the world." [155]

The next visitor, le Sieur Granger, who was interested in seeing the library, was refused entry, and the monks expressed an attitude that convinced him that they were not willing to part with their books at any price.[156] Granger, who visited the Monastery of Abû Maqâr in 1730, found the monastery in ruins, the monks poor, ignorant and badly lodged.[157]

Sonnini, who visited the monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn in 1778, did not venture to the Monastery of Abû Maqâr because of the many unpleasant experiences he had with the marauding Bedouins who had robbed and completely stripped him in front of the Monastery of al-Barâmûs. Yet, he mentions the Monastery of Abû Maqâr, and adds that the Arabs gave these ruins in the environs of the monastery a name which signifies "Castle of Women," a strange denomination to designate a retreat erected from an aversion to women. [158]

It occurred in 1779, that Count d'Entraigues, the young nephew of M. de Saint Priest, the French Ambassador to Constantinople, was sent to Egypt under the pretence of having him study the results of the mission of M. de Tett, who served as inspector general of the commercial ports of the Levant (Echelles du Levant). In actuality, this young man was encouraged to travel to Egypt so as to remove him from the temptations and the libidinous nights of Pera.

In January 1799, accompanied by a dragoman, two janissaries, and a dozen Arabs, he set out to visit the monasteries in the Desert of St. Macarius, one of the reasons being to atone for his sinful life. In the monasteries he was received by a group of feeble monks, who apparently showed signs of coarseness and fatigue on account of their prayers and fasting. The Count then pretended to have discovered,

---

(155) Omont, *op. cit.*, I, 500.

(156) Granger, *Relation du Voyage fait en Egypt*, 179.

(157) *Ibid.*

(158) Sonnini, *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt*, 309.

without actually having obtained them, the most valuable mss., among which was a complete edition of Diodurus of Sicily,[159] one ms. of Polybius,[160] and the vanished Hypotyposes of Clement of Alexandria.[161] All of this, of course, was a matter of pure imagination on the part of the young traveller, who, according to his own avowal, neither knew Greek nor was capable of deciphering any mss. [162]

Twenty years after Sonnini's visit, the French General Antoine F. Andréossy went, in January 1799, on a reconnaissance of the Natrûn Valley for the French army under Napoleon. Andréossy measured the various distances between the monasteries and established their exact geographical locations.[163] At that time, the Monastery of Abû Maqâr was inhabited by twenty monks. Its water must have been quite salty, for some 400 metres away from the monastery, Andréossy mentions another well, the water of which was very good. Regarding the churches, the General mentions the disorder and the poverty of the monks which did not permit them to beautify their sanctuaries. He must have seen the library for he mentions the books which are "manuscripts ascétiques" on parchment in the Coptic language with an Arabic translation on the margin. The relation which the monks had with the neighbouring Arabs was a very friendly one, in so far as the monks supplied them with food which they gave to them from the wall, for they never opened their gates to them.[164]

7. The 19th and 20th Century Travellers.

In 1817, T.R. Joliffe, passing the small village of at-Tarânah, merely mentions that situated west of the village is the Monastery of St. Macarius.[165]

Early in the nineteenth century, about 1818, a fragmentary Bohairic Psalter was removed from the Monastery of St. Macarius and

---

(159) Diodurus Siculus, a Greek historian, wrote his monumental *Bibliotheca historica* in or around 20 B.C. The history consisted of forty books which were divided into three main parts.

(160) Polybius (201-120 B.C.), a Greek historian, his work, the 'Ιστορίαι contains forty volumes of which the first five are extant.

(161) The 'Υποτυπώσεις, adumbrations or outlines in eight books, are still mentioned by Eusebius and St. Jerome.

(162) Auriant, *Revue Blue*, May 17, 1930, quoted by Carré, *Voyageurs et Ecrivains Français*, 106.

(163) Andréossy in *Description de l'Egypte*, I, 298.

(164) *Ibid.*, 292. At present relations with the Bedouins are friendly and are based upon mutual cooperation. In need, the Bedouins still turn to the Monasteries for food. The monks employ them as servants or workers.

(165) Joliffe, *Lettres sur la Palestine, la Syrie et l'Egypte*, 296.

given by B. Drovetti to Peyron. It is now at Turin. Whether Drovetti personally visited the monastery or acquired the manuscript from some other person is not known.[166]

In January 1839, Dr. Tattam visited the Monastery of St. Macarius, where he discovered about one hundred liturgies, and a beautiful copy of the Epistles in Coptic, which the monks, however, would not sell. There were also, as in the other monasteries visited by Tattam, a great number of loose leaves, from which he selected about one hundred, belonging to two or three different vocabularies, and he was permitted to bring them away.[167]

In 1843, Sir Gardner Wilkinson visited the Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. After having called on the monks of the Monastery of the Syrians, he visited the "Dayr Makarios", where he saw many manuscripts bound and in good condition, yet the whole ground in the tower of the monastery was strewed with the torn leaves and fragments of manuscripts "which having been copies, the monks considered of no further use." [168] The monks, for the most part were exceedingly ignorant, and their whole knowledge and thoughts were much confined to very limited theological learning. While in the Monastery of the Syrians, Sir Gardner suffered from the assaults of some hundreds of bugs. The Monastery of Abû Maqâr, however, was free from this scourge, and of the other two monasteries (Dair al-Barâmûs and Dair Anbâ Bishoî) he could say nothing.[169] At the time of his visit, the monastery was inhabited by 22 monks, and thus rated as the second strongest monastery in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn.[170]

On the 18th of April 1844, Konstantin v. Tischendorf sailed from Bûlâq to at-Tarânah in order to visit from there the Coptic monasteries of the Libyan desert.[171] The first monastery to be visited was Dair Abû Maqâr, where he was hospitably received. "We found fifteen brethren in it, while Sicard saw here only two monks and two secular deacons. Their countenances were all sallow, and several of them of a sickly yellow, they almost all suffered in their eyes, and the superior was totally blind.... The cloister fare is more than meagre. Meat is indulged in but on few days in the course of the year. The chief food

---

(166) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, I, xi.

(167) Platt, *Journal of a Tour through Egypt*, I, 284.

(168) Wilkinson, *Modern Egypt and Thebes*, I, 389.

(169) *Ibid.*, 391.

(170) As-Suriân: 30-40 monks, Abû Maqâr: 22 monks, Anbâ Bishoî: 13 monks, al-Barâmûs: 7 monks. *Ibid.*, 387.

(171) Tischendorf, *Travels in the East*, 45.

consists of nothing but bread steeped in a concoction of a disagreeable flavour, consisting of lentils, onions, and linseed oil." [172] Here Tischendorf observed the celebration of the Eucharist. "Two peculiarities struck me in the arrangement of the church. The one is the oven behind the sacristy, employed in baking the sour sacramental bread.... The other peculiarity is a four cornered stone basin in front of the church, which is used for a certain sacred bathing ceremonial." [173] Tischendorf's main purpose in visiting the monastery was to search for manuscripts, and so he went to the tower, where he saw the manuscripts heaped indiscriminately together. Lying on the ground, or thrown into large baskets beneath masses of dust, he found innumerable fragments of old, torn and destroyed manuscripts.[174]

From the 17th century onwards, the world has penetrated into the desert. The following note expresses, however, the reverse. When the Suez Canal was opened in November 1869 by the Empress Eugénie, the celebrations were attended by Anbâ Dîmîtrîûs II, the 111th Patriarch, who, at one time, was a monk, and later the hegoumenos of the Monastery of Abû Maqâr.[175]

In 1873, Greville Chester went to the Monastery of Abû Maqâr to study some of its archaeology and architecture, though he was not permitted to enter the keep, because, shortly before, a certain Fortune Ame had robbed the Monastery of its silver plate and all the valuable manuscripts. [176]

One of the first travel-guides to refer to the Monastery of St. Macarius was Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Lower and Upper Egypt*. "This excursion does not present any great attraction to the general traveller, but those who care for Christian architecture and antiquities will find much of interest. It may be done in six days : First day, Cairo - Tirranah (at-Tarânah), second day, Tirranah - Dair Abû Maqâr, third day, Dair Abû Maqâr - Dair Surîân and Anbâ Bishoî, fourth day, Dair Surîân - Dair al-Barâmûs, fifth day, Dair al-Barâmûs - Tirranah, sixth day, Tirranah - Cairo.[177] The usual route from the Nile to the valley of the Natrun Lake is from Tirranah, or the start may be made from Banî Salâmah, another village a little higher up the Nile. Both places may be reached from Cairo by water or by rail. Camels

---

(172) *Ibid.*, 50.

(173) *Ibid.*, 51.

(174) *Ibid.*, 52.

(175) *Hist. Patr.*, III, IV, & Addition, MS. 219 in the Coptic Museum, 269.

(176) Chester, "Notes on the Coptic Dayrs of the Wady Natroun...," 106.

(177) Murray, *A Handbook for Travellers in Lower and Upper Egypt*, II, 360.

or donkeys and a guard can be obtained in Tirranah for the journey of 10-12 hours across the desert to Wady Natrun. The headman of Tirranah is a Copt, from whom it is well to get an introduction to the Qummus of Dair Macarius. The journey across the desert is very monotonous, but at length, after crossing an elevation covered with shining black pebbles, the long lines of the Dair Macarius come in sight. This convent is surrounded by a lofty wall with an entrance on one side so low that you are obliged to stoop down on entering.... As soon as the bell has announced the arrival of a stranger, proper inquiries and observations are made to ascertain that there is no danger in opening the door for his reception, and no Arabs are admitted, unless, by forming his escort, they have some one responsible for their conduct. Near Dair Macarius are the ruins of three other convents and about half a mile to the East are mounds of pottery that indicate the site of an ancient town, perhaps Sciathis." [178]

In 1881, on their way from the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî to that of Abû Maqâr, the Frs. Jullien, Noory and Nourrit stopped at the Tree of Obedience, which, as tradition informs us, was connected with the life and work of St. John the Short. According to Fr. Jullien, the tree is a *zizyphus spina-Christi,* the very kind that provided the thorns for the crown of Christ.[179] The priests stopped for a little while to say a prayer, and then continued their way to the Monastery of Abû Maqâr.[180] Having arrived at the monastery, the priests visited the various churches and were shown the bodies of some sixteen patriarchs in the Chapel of St. Michael. As in the other monasteries, Fr. Jullien entered into religious discussions with the monks in an attempt to convince them to return to the Latin Church.

Two years later, in 1883, Alfred J. Butler visited the desert monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. He had wanted to make the journey in the spring of 1881, but the Khedive ordered careful inquiries to be made by the authorities, and the result was a prohibition.[181] It was reported that the Bedouins were in a restive and hostile mood owing to some recent fighting with Egyptian soldiers, and would be certain to rob and turn back any travellers they might encounter in the desert, though on the whole the chances were against their caring particularly

---

(178) *Ibid.*, 363.

(179) For a discussion on the identity of the tree, *cf.* Fleury, Rohault de, *Les instruments de la Passion,* Paris, 1870.

(180) Jullien, *L'Egypte, Souvenirs Bibliques et Chrétiens,* 50.

(181) Butler, *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt,* II, 290.

for unnecessary murder.[182] Then in the winter of 1883-1884, Butler was enabled to revisit Egypt, and this time the Khedive pronounced the route secure. "We were, however, recommended to wear the tarbush or fez, as the sight of western hats is somewhat irritating to the children of the wilderness. The Coptic patriarch furnished us with letters both to the priest at Tris (Atrîs) which, although a Muslim village, contains a small Coptic colony and two churches, and also to the superiors of the four monasteries in the desert." [183] From Atrîs, Butler entered the desert, "stumbling on over loose sand mixed with rushes and Christ-thorn.... We hastened on, and found the monks waiting in a group outside the Dair to receive us : they kissed our hands with exclamations of thankfulness for our safe arrival, and led us through the narrow doorway within the fortress, where we were soon lodged in the guestchamber, and lay on rugs upon the floor to rest and wait for our tents and camels.... Next morning, the unwonted sound of a church bell roused us at five o'clock, and with the dawn we got a view of the monastery, which the darkness of the night before had rendered impossible."[184] Butler then continues his description of the monastery, pointing out the three churches, the refectory, the qasr and its chapels. At the time of his visit, the number of monks at Dair Abû Maqâr was twenty, of whom twelve were in priests' orders. They were allowed sometimes to visit the patriarch, and even to see friends living in Cairo, by special permission, but they must return to live and to die in the desert. [185]

On March 16, 1896, the Honourable Arthur Silva White left the Pyramids of Gizeh on his march to the Oasis of Siwa. Following the ancient pilgrimage track, White reached on the third day of his journey the Monastery of Abû Maqâr. "On ringing the bell, a monk appeared at the top of the parapet, and inquired our purpose. This known, he retired, with a muttered phrase that sounded unlike a benediction ; and shortly afterwards, the *kummus* or abbot arrived, appearing mysteriously round the angle of the wall, to interview us. After compliments, we were permitted to enter through the heavy ironbound door, the laborious opening of which recalled a scene in the Middle Ages. Over the cigarettes, the *kummus* was communicative. He asserted that

---

(182) *Ibid.*, Some ideas of the perils of the journey one hundred years ago may be formed from Sonnini's account, *cf.* p. 138.

(183) *Ibid.*, 291.

(184) *Ibid.*, 295.

(185) *Ibid.*, 301.

Dehr Makar was the most ancient of the monasteries, and that its revenues and resources were derived chiefly from land of which he was the owner ; that there were thirty monks in seclusion, who worked during the day and prayed at night." [186]

On the first Sunday of December 1899, Professor Dr. Georg Steindorff, accompanied by the German Consul in Alexandria, Freiherr Curt von Grünau, arrived at the Monastery of Abû Maqâr on their way to the Oasis of Siwa. They visited the monastery very thoroughly, and their description of the buildings, the churches and the tower is enlightening.[187] The water for the monks came from a well located behind the Church of St. Macarius, and it was very good for drinking purposes. Steindorff suggested, that this might really be the same well which was dug by St. Macarius. After having visited the churches, which are all correctly identified, he went up to the qasr where he saw the monastery library in a wild and chaotic condition. He looked for some valuable manuscripts, but could not find anything of great value. The only curiosity which he discovered was an old and torn French-Arabic elementary grammar. In 1899, the monastery was inhabited by twenty monks all of whom were fairly young.[188] In the afternoon of the same day, Steindorff and his party departed from the monastery in a westerly direction to Maghârah and Siwa.

Following Butler and Steindorff, Gayet was one of the first scholars to be concerned with the archaeological and architectural features of the monasteries in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. In his excellent work, *L'Art Copte,* published in 1902 in Paris, the Coptologist and architect presents many interesting illustrations, sketches and blueprints.[189] About the same time, Joseph Strzygowski visited the Monastery of Abû Maqâr, where, among other things, he studied the wooden screens in the Chapel of the first floor of the qasr.[190]

In March, 1904, Agnes Smith Lewis and her sister, Mrs. Margaret Dunlop Gibson may well have been the first ladies to visit the Monastery of Abû Maqâr. They reached the Desert of Scetis by dromedaries which they had hired in Cairo. At Dair Anbâ Bûlâ, the ladies were pulled up on the monastery wall by windlass ; they entered the Dair Abû Maqâr, however, through a very low doorway. At the monastery they were introduced to an old monk who had lived for 45 years in the monastery.

---

(186) White, *From Sphinx to Oracle,* 28.

(187) Steindorff, *Durch die Libysche Wüste zur Amonoase,* 23.

(188) *Ibid.,* 35.

(189) Gayet, *L'Art Copte,* 168-172.

(190) Strzygowski, *Koptische Kunst,* 148.

For the past six years, however, he had been a solitary, emerging only on Sundays from the wilderness to attend the church service in the monastery.

Interested in manuscripts, the two ladies entered the keep, where they saw books as well as manuscripts kept in a very untidy manner in a three-shelved cupboard. Those which Agnes Smith Lewis saw, however, were late Arabic texts, and apparently of no great value. At the end of the room she then discovered a table with a pile of manuscripts which had lost their bindings, among which were many loose leaves, but they too were all in Arabic. "I could very easily have placed some of the manuscripts under my travelling cloak without the slightest fear of detection, but my conscience would not allow me to do so." [191] Later, during their visit, the ladies approached the monks with the request to buy some of the manuscripts but they met with a refusal.

The Kaufmann Expedition visited the Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn in 1905. Before proceeding to the Dair Abû Maqâr, they visited the salt works which were established in 1890 by an Englishman named Hooker, after whom the well, Bir Hooker, and the little colony of officials and workmen were named. In 1896, the management passed into Swiss hands, and four years later an English joint stock company took over the business which used to provide salt for the whole of Egypt. Among the possessions of the salt factory, in which machinery of German origin was used, was a carriage of some historical interest. It was the vehicle which was used by the French Empress Eugénie amid Oriental pomp at the opening of the Suez Canal. Hooker had bought the carriage from the Khedivial stables in order to have some means of transporting distinguished visitors to the Wâdî.[192]

Before reaching the Monastery of Abû Maqâr, Ewald Falls records how they hunted a gazelle to vary their daily menu. At the time of their visit, the monastery was inhabited by twenty-five monks, though it appeared to be the poorest monastery. The whole place showed signs of terrible decay. Falls remarks that the architecture of the monastery belonged to different periods. The gloomy principal church, with the exception of the decoration of the haikal and the reliquary with the bodies of the three Macarii, possessed nothing that they had not seen in finer and better condition in other monasteries. The names of foreign visitors adorn the nave, and, indeed, Falls writes, the monks themselves asked their guests to eternalize themselves in that way.[193]

---

(191) Lewis "Hidden Egypt", 754.

(192) Falls, *Three Years in the Libyan Desert*, 98 f.

(193) *Ibid.*, 108.

Behind the principal church of the monastery, Falls was shown the "Macarius well", which furnished good water. The water-wheel was fairly large, and instead of a pail, clay vessels brought up the clean water from a depth of more than 10 metres.

Close to the monastery, traces of hyenas and wolves led to ruins which the Arabs described as remains of the "Qasr al-Banât," or "the Castle of Virgins." [194] A dozen or so lesser ruins could be found in a circumference of a few hours' ride, fallen to pieces and buried in sand.

In the winter seasons of 1909-1910 and 1910-1911, the Metropolitan Museum of Arts Egyptian Expedition studied the Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn and Messrs. Palmer-Jones, W. Hauer and H. Burton were engaged in making drawings and sketches, and in taking photographs of the architecture of the churches and other buildings. Unfortunately, the work was suspended on account of Mr. Palmer-Jones' departure from Egypt, and, after that, the First World War.[195]

The Monastery of Abû Maqâr was the last monastery in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn which Johann Georg, Duke of Saxony, visited in 1912. Coming from the Dair Anbâ Bishoî, his first impression of Dair Abû Maqâr was that of a desert fortress.[196] As in the case of the other monasteries, the Duke noticed, and strongly criticized, the renovations which in his opinion merely obliterated some of the ancient valuable wall-paintings. From the Church of Abû Maqâr he obtained two icons which portrayed the heads of two apostles.[197] He noticed that in the Church of St. Iskhîrûn the wall-paintings were unfortunately destroyed, though some could still be identified. After that, the Duke went to the Church of the Forty Martyrs [198] which was used for the principal services. The interior of the church was interesting to him because of the pillars with their ancient capitals. The refectory was, according to his opinion, even darker than those of the other monasteries, and appeared to him even more like a prison. The monks used it during the feasts. The Church of al-'Adhrâ in the keep attracted his special attention. Also situated in the keep are the Chapel of St. Michael and two other chapels with wall-paintings of the 12th century. In one of the chapels he discovered fragments of manuscripts of the 13th-15th centuries. Everyone belonging to the party of visitors, including Marcus Simaika, Dr. Karge and the Duke, took some of the fragments, almost

---

(194) "Castle of the maidens."

(195) Jones, "The Monasteries of the Wadi Natrun." *Metr. Mus. Bull.* 6 and 7.

(196) Johann Georg, *Streifzüge durch die Kirchen und Klöster Aegyptens*, 37.

(197) *Ibid.*, 38, 69, 105, plates.

(198) Johann Georg no doubt meant the Church of the 49 Martyrs.

as if they were souvenirs. Finally, Johann Georg went to the monastery library where he discovered several Coptic manuscripts of the 10th and 11th century on parchment. On the advice of Marcus Simaika he tore some of them from their cover and took them with him. From Dair Abû Maqâr they rode on their camels to a small railway-station, where a special train waited to take them to Cairo. A few days later, the hegoumenoi of Dair as-Surîân, Dair Anbâ Bishoî and Dair al-Barâmûs, visited the Duke at the Shepheards Hotel in Cairo.

During the First World War 1914-1918, the Monastery of Abû Maqâr was visited by Dr. G.A. Auden who obtained some leaves of manuscripts, including one from the Difnâr.[199]

In 1920-21, Hugh Evelyn White visited the monastery. The purpose of his visit was to study the literary material that was still there. "When, on Palm Sunday, 1920, I first visited the monastery to study its archaeology, one of the monks who was guiding me over the keep, led me into the inner of two communicating rooms which occupied the south-west angle of the second floor. Descending beneath the floor by a trap-door, he reappeared with his arms full of loose leaves of paper manuscripts in Coptic and Arabic which he tossed carelessly upon the floor. It was clearly imperative to search this waste-paper deposit, however, I concealed my eagerness until I should have made good my footing in the monastery. But as soon as I was on friendly terms with the monks, I asked and obtained the consent of the Amin ed Der to allow me to examine the secret chamber for myself. To this he and the other monks good naturedly agreed. The "oubliette" proved to be about 2.5 m. deep, and to occupy the whole interspace between the second-floor room and the dome of the first-floor room below. Here, mixed with the large broken baskets seen by Tischendorf, with rags, broken glass, wood fragments, and large stones, was a vast quantity of loose leaves, some in chaotic heaps, others half buried in the thick bed of dust or soil with which the crown of the dome beneath was overlaid. Paper predominated, but here and there search revealed a leaf or a fragment of parchment. Working by candle light, for there was no window or loophole, and in some haste, I collected all the parchment I could find and some paper leaves taken almost at random. These the monks most kindly permitted me to take away with me when I left the monastery .... Examination soon showed the importance of a number of the leaves, and systematic search through the whole contents of the "oubliette" was consequently desirable."[200]

---

(199) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, I, xii, n.

(200) *Ibid.*, xlii.

In April 1921, Evelyn White returned to the Monastery of Abû Maqâr to resume his work. The hegoumenos of the monastery, Abûnâ Maksîmûs (Maximus) most kindly authorized him to search for and take away to Cairo any loose leaves or fragments. "The monks, less complaisant than formerly, affected to regard the project as a piece of sacrilege and read over to me certain of the anathemas directed against any who should remove from the monastery the books in which they had once been inscribed. These warnings being of no avail, they implored me not to carry away the whole of their paper. They became so pathetic that in a weak moment I consented to take only a large section. On these terms the monks withdrew their opposition and left me to incur my own damnation unmolested. For five days, from Thursday in Holy Week, therefore, I worked in the oubliette, turning over and scrutinizing, handful by handful, the entire mass of paper, raking through the mass of dust, and selecting every fragment of Coptic which seemed in the least likely to be of value. The process, carried on in appalling conditions, was repeated thrice and resulted in the recovery of many more parchment leaves and fragments and some hundred paper leaves. On Easter Monday, I left the monastery and returned to Cairo. To illustrate the accidents which beset the working archaeologist, I may add that I was nearly arrested at the railway-station of Khatâtba at the instant of the abbot of another monastery, who had hastily concluded that my spoils were snatched without his leave from his own convent." [201] The manuscripts discovered by Evelyn White are now exhibited in the Coptic Museum in Old Cairo.

In the month of February 1923, Dr. J. Rendel Harris, Mr. Herbert G. Wood and Dr. William H.P. Hatch who served as Annual Professor to the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, went to visit the Monasteries in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. "Since many important manuscripts had been discovered in these desert monasteries in times past", writes Hatch, "we hoped that we might perhaps have the good fortune to find some Christian work in Coptic or Syriac that had eluded former searchers. Such was the purpose of our journey, and in some measure our hopes were realized." [202] At the time of his visit, Hatch states that the once populous region was inhabited only by 83 monks in the four monasteries, of which 15 inhabited the Dair Abû Maqâr.

---

(201) *Ibid.*

(202) Hatch, "A visit to the Coptic Convents in Nitria," 93.

At the Monastery of Abû Maqâr, the party was hospitably received. Hatch was shown the mummified bodies of twenty saints. Then he tried to take a photograph of the hegoumenos, but was prevented from doing so by the latter's vigorous protests. The party was chiefly interested in the library, and the monks were very willing to let them inspect it and showed them every courtesy. "I detected in a wooden box several paper leaves rudely bound together which seemed to me more interesting than the rest, and I quietly laid them to one side. When we were ready to leave the convent, I asked the prior if I might take them with me, and after some hesitation he allowed me to do so."[203]

In 1925, M.A. Kammerer, Commissaire-Directeur de la Caisse de la Dette Publique, visited the Monastery of Abû Maqâr which he deems to be the most ancient monastery. On entering the monastery, he saw to the right a Christian Church with cupolas that reminded him of a mosque without a minaret. "The more one examines these Coptic churches, the more one discovers their resemblances to mosques." [204] This relationship Kammerer tries to explain by stating that, after the Arab conquest, many of the churches were transformed into mosques, and that this type then became the predominant form of construction. Noticing the ruins within the monastery, our visitor ascribes the general decay to the fact that it is the most ancient of the monasteries in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn.

In the latter part of the third decade of the 20th century, Marcus Simaika arranged for the cataloguing of the manuscripts in the Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, which was completed in March 1929.

In the spring of 1930, and again in 1931, Prince 'Umar Tûsûn accompanied by Dr. Puy-Haubert and Prof. Breccia visited the four monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. The contribution of the Prince to the study of Coptic monasticism is remarkable in so far as he divided the history of the monastic movement into ten periods, tracing through these periods the respective increase and decrease of the number of monasteries in the Natrun Valley. Furthermore, he identified the localities of the abandoned monasteries and provided cement columns with copper plates, giving the name of the monastery. Though the cement columns are still there, the copper plates have been stolen by the Bedouins. The following chart is a condensed resumé of 'Umar Tûsûn's study.[205]

---

(203) *Ibid.*

(204) Kammerer, "Les Monastères," 134.

(205) Toussoun, *Etude sur le Wadi Natrun*, 51-58.

1st period (565-605)	Dair Abû Maqâr, Anbâ Bishoî, St. John the Short, al-Barâmûs.
2nd period (859-881)	Dair Abû Maqâr, Anbâ Bishoî, St. John the Short, al-Barâmûs, The Virgin of al-Barâmûs, St. John Kame, Syrians.
3rd period (1017)	Dair Abû Maqâr, Anbâ Bishoî, St. John the Short, al-Barâmûs, The Virgin of al-Barâmûs, St. John Kame, Syrians.
4th period (1209)	Dair Abû Maqâr, Anbâ Bishoî, St. John the Short, al-Barâmûs, The Virgin of al-Barâmûs, St. John Kame, Syrians, Anbâ Arsânîûs.
5th period (1330)	Dair Abû Maqâr, Anbâ Bishoî, St. John the Short, al-Barâmûs, The Virgin of al-Barâmûs, St. John Kame, Syrians.
6th period (1347)	Dair Abû Maqâr, Anbâ Bishoî, St. John the Short, al-Barâmûs, The Virgin of al-Barâmûs, St. John Kame, Syrians, Anbâ Nûḅ, Abyssinians, Armenians.
7th period (1440)	Dair Abû Maqâr, Anbâ Bishoî, St. John the Short, al-Barâmûs, The Virgin of al-Barâmûs, St. John Kame, Syrians.
8th period (1482)	Dair Abû Maqâr, Anbâ Bishoî, St. John the Short, The Virgin of al-Barâmûs, Syrians, St. John Kame.
9th period (1672)	Dair Abû Maqâr, Anbâ Bishoî, St. John the Short, The Virgin of al-Barâmûs, Syrians.
10th period (1710)	Dair Abû Maqâr, Anbâ Bishoî, the Virgin of al-Barâmûs, Syrians.

When the famous traveller H.V. Morton visited the monks of Dair Abû Maqâr in 1937, he noticed "a gaunt-looking monk kneeling (on the roof of a cluster of cells) and making prostration after prostration." He was told by other monks that this particular monk had not spoken to anyone for seven years. "Isolated in an uninhabited corner of the monastery, he lives there, a hermit in the desert. He leaves his cell only to attend church and to collect a few scraps of the hard bread on which he lives. He is thirty years of age." [206]

---

(206) Morton, *Through Lands of the Bible*, 248.

8. The Monastery in the Middle of the 20th Century

From an historical point of view, the Monastery of Abû Maqâr is the most outstanding and interesting monastery in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. It has supplied more patriarchs than any other monastery,[207] and it can boast of more places of worship than any other monastery. The most significant building in the monastery is the Church of Abû Maqâr which has a long history by itself.[208] From the literary sources of the Middle Ages we gather that the present Church of Abû Maqâr is merely a remnant of a once beautiful and majestic building, of which large portions have been destroyed. At present, the church has merely two haikals, to the south, the haikal of Anbâ Banîâmîn, to the north, the haikal of St. John the Baptist.[209] The eastern niche of the former haikal was, at one time, the seat of the patriarch. On the south side of the choir stands the feretory with the bodily remains of the three Macarii and St. John the Short.[210] Recently, the church has been decorated with pictures of Abû Maqâr and the three Macarii. The northern haikal, which is dedicated to St. John the Baptist, is interesting because of its "inner choir", and its shrine which was built by Mîkhâîl Yûsûf and his brother Bishoî in 1930. The feretory contains the relics of Anbâ Mîkhâîl II (831-851), Anbâ Mîkhâîl III (881-907), Anbâ Ghabrîâl I (910-921), Anbâ Quzmân III (921-933), Anbâ Makarîûs (933-953), Anbâ Akhristûdulûs I (1047-1077), Anbâ Kîrillus II (1078-

---

[207] Twenty-nine Patriarchs came from the Monastery of St. Macarius.

[208] Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, III, 31-49, 83-112.

[209] Until the middle of the 14th century, the Church of St. John the Baptist was known as the Church of St. Mark. The haikal of St. Mark certainly adjoined the sanctuary of Benjamin immediately to the north, for the narratives of the Consecration of the Chrism in the *Book of Chrism* (1305, 1330, 1340) describe in detail the solemn procession in which all the important parts of the Great Church were visited. The haikal of the Church of St. Mark was probably built to accommodate the head of St. Mark during the brief period of its deposit in the monastery. When the chrism ceased to be consecrated in the monastery, and the intimate connection with the throne of St. Mark came to an end, there was no longer any need for a haikal of St. Mark. *Cf.* Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, III, 43. The last time that the Holy Chrism was consecrated in the Dair Abû Maqâr was in 1373-74 A.D. by the Patriarch Anbâ Ghabrîâl. In 1429-30 A.D., it was consecrated in the Church of St. Mercurius in Cairo by the Patriarch Anbâ Yûânnis in the presence of Mâr Bâsîlîûs, Patriarch of Antioch. In 1460-61 A.D., it was consecreated by Anbâ Mattâûs in the Church of the Lady in the Harat ar-Rûm, Cairo. There were brought from the Dair Abû Maqâr the necessary vessels, and after this it is not recorded that the Chrism was consecrated in the Dair Abû Maqâr, but in Cairo, *Cf. Kitâb Mulakhkhas Târikh al-Maîrum wa* ...,20-21.

[210] *Cf.* p. 33.

1092), Anbâ Yûânnis V (1146-1166), Anbâ Murqus III (1174-1189), Anbâ Yûânnis XV (1619-1629) and the son of Martinius, a minister in the reign of Theodosius the Younger.[211]

The Church of Abû Iskhîrûn is built in honour of St. Iskhîrûn of Qallîn. Burmester points out that the Church of St. Iskhîrûn possibly owes its dedication to St. Iskhîrûn to its having served as a resting place for his relics till the completion of his church in the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî.[212] The church has three haikals, though only two altars. The date of the building of this church may well fall within the 14th century. The church is not used at present for divine services, and thus serves as a storage place. Butler, visiting this church in 1883, found posted on the wall by the haikal screen a paper covered with finely written Arabic characters, clearly denoting a form of thanksgiving. When translated it proved to be a form of thanksgiving for an event which took place in the year 1882.[213]

The Church of ash-Shiyûkh or the Church of the Forty-nine Martyrs is used, at present, for the Liturgy during the Fast of the Nativity and on the Feast of the Nativity.[214] During this period, the relics of the three Macarii and St. John the Short are transferred from the Church of Abû Maqâr and placed at the north wall of the choir. The church is adorned with five icons representing the three Macarii, Abû Maqâr, St. Mark, St. George, and the Blessed Virgin. The church, as its name indicates, serves as the place of burial for the Forty-nine Martyrs and for the bodies of the "magistrianus" and his son. It is interesting to note that, at the time of the compilation of the *Synaxarium*, the relics of the Forty-nine Martyrs were still preserved in a cell, which was outside the present monastery.[215] The *Synaxarium* for the 26th Tûbah states that, after the martyrdom of the Forty-nine, "the monks feared for the bodies and took them from the place of martyrdom near to the Church of Abû Maqâr. They constructed for them a crypt on which they built a church during the reign of the Patriarch Theodosius... Their church is to-day in the monastery called by their name in Coptic Bihimsa basit, that is forty-nine"[216]

---

(211) Emperor Theodosius II (401-450) succeeded his father Arcadius as Emperor of the East in 408. It was during his reign that the Forty-nine Martyrs witnessed for their faith and suffered martyrdom.

(212) Burmester, "The Date of the Translation of Saint Iskhîrûn," *Le Muséon*, (1937), 53-60.

(213) Butler, *op. cit.*, I, 302.

(214) Forty-three days before the Feast of the Nativity.

(215) *Cf.* p. 165.

(216) Synax., *Patr. Orient.*, XI, 702-3.

Down to the 14th century, therefore, the relics were not in the monastery, and there was no Church of the Forty-nine Martyrs. Butler, interestingly, does not mention the Forty-nine Martyrs in his description of the church. He merely points out that "the church contains nothing of interest except a latish picture of St. Macarius, who is wrongly represented with a jewelled epigonation!" [217]

Evelyn White was told by the monks of Dair Anbâ Bishoî that the church was built about two hundred years ago and thus he holds to the date of 1720 as the year of its building. This date, furthermore, is substantiated by the architectural evidence. [218]

The qasr of the Monastery of Abû Maqâr is by far the most interesting one of its kind, because of its many chapels and churches. One enters the qasr by a narrow draw-bridge which leads to the first story of the building. The interior of the tower is divided into three floors, the ground floor, the first and the second story. About the ground floor Evelyn White gives the following description: "In its present state it is an unpleasantly impressive place. Nearly all the windows are blocked and the chambers are the haunt of countless bats, to whose long tenancy the deadly odour which infects the atmosphere is due. The heavy stillness, broken only by the soft fluttering and eerie squeaking of the bats, the grim massiveness of the blackened and unplastered masonry half seen in the dim and broken light, and the damp corruption of the air impress the unaccustomed visitor like some infernal carnal house. Yet it is evident that when the light and air found admittance, the ground floor was by no means an ignoble place." [219]

On the first story of the qasr is the Chapel of al-'Adhrâ, a relatively new church with three haikals. The screen which may be the work of a 13th century artist is certainly the only thing worth seeing.

On the second story of the qasr are located the three churches which are remarkable on account of their wall paintings. The Church of Michael the Archangel is the most northern church, and ranks as a "proper church" in the patriarchal list of churches provided by Somers Clarke.[220] The church has one haikal which has a beautiful screen. The south wall of the church is decorated with pictures [221]

---

(217) Butler, *op. cit.*, I, 229.

(218) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, III, 123.

(219) *Ibid.*, 59.

(220) Clarke, *Christian Antiquities*, 202.

(221) Ancient Syriac and Armenian graffiti superimposed upon the wall-paintings are barely visible. We find numerous Syriac graffiti on the north-western pillar of the church. These graffiti appear side-ways on the pillar, thus suggesting that they may have been written before or during the construction of the church.

representing a whole gallery of Warrior Saints : St. Eusebius,[222] St. Basilides,[223] St. Justus,[224] St. Apoli,[225] and St. Theoclea.[226] On the north wall within the choir screen is a painting of Saint Michael, and a little further to the east a small figure, probably that of St. Hilaria, the daughter of the Emperor Zeno.[227]

At the time of Butler's visit, no less than sixteen patriarchs were kept here in plain deal boxes. Eight cases, each containing two bodies, were piled one upon another at the south side of the altar, and so far from being hermetically sealed, they were so closely put together and so slender in make, that one could clearly see the shrivelled forms of the patriarchs lying like so many mummies in their coffins.[228] In 1920, the relics of the patriarchs were still being kept in a large wooden feretory on the south wall of the sanctuary. In the meantime, however, they have been transferred to the Church of St. John the Baptist.

In the nave of the church there are in all nine pillars with rather interesting capitals, some Doric, other Corinthian with crosses carved among the foliage.

The Church of St. Antony, St. Paul and St. Pachomius is situated south of the Church of St. Michael on the second floor. On the north wall of the chapel are paintings of the three founders of Egyptian monasticism to whom the Church is dedicated.

---

(222) St. Eusebius is commemorated on the 23rd Amshîr. He was the son of Basilides. As a member of the Roman army, he was sent to Egypt to Armenius. He witnessed for Christ in front of the Governor Maurianos and suffered torture for his confession. Upon the demand of the Emperor Diocletian, Eusebius was finally beheaded.

(223) St. Basilides is commemorated on the 11th Tût. The Basilides family is one of the most distinguished families of martyrs under the reign of Diocletian. Basilides was tortured and put to death by Masouros, the Governor of the Pentapolis.

(224) St. Justus is commemorated on the 10th Amshîr. He was the son of the Emperor Numerian and Patricia who was the sister of Basilides. Shocked by Diocletian's anti-Christian attitudes, he joined his cousin Eusebius in protest. He was sent to Armenius the Governor of Alexandria. Eventually he was sent to Antinoë where he was tried and executed.

(225) St. Apoli is commemorated on the 1st Mesore. The son of Justus Stratelates, he belonged to the Basilides family. He was sent to Alexandria and from there to Bubastis. He suffered torture and punishment for his Christian faith, but was several times miraculously freed. Finally he was cast into a dungeon and then beheaded.

(226) St. Theoclea is commemorated on the 11th Bashans. She was the wife of Justus and thus belongs to the Basilides family. Her suffering for her faith caused the conversion of her fellow-prisoners. She suffered martyrdom during the Diocletian persecution.

(227) *Cf.* p. 167.

(228) Butler, *op. cit.*, I, 304.

The Church of as-Suwâh or the Church of the Hermits or Wanderers in the Desert is the southernmost of the three Churches on the second floor.[229] The wall-paintings of the church represent nine figures of

View from the keep, showing the belfry and the Church of the Forty-nine Martyrs.

---

(229) The following note is attached to the nave-screen of the Church: "In this Church of the Hermits who are fifty-eight Saints, (there are) on the north wall nine pictures. On the east, the picture of Anbâ Samwîl, who is known as the head of the Dair al-Qalamûn; on its west, Anbâ Yûânnis, Qummus Shabrâhât. Among the Hermits, the Forty-nine Elders are not painted here. And Abû Nûfâr (Onuphrius) the Hermit, and the hair of his beard (is) long (and) covers his body. And west of them, Anbâ Abrâm at the railing (balustrade), and his picture is damaged by rain (from) a hole (in) the ceiling, and Anbâ Gâûgâ (George). And Anbâ Abullû and Anbâ Adîb and Anbâ Mikhâîl the Hermit and Anbâ Bîgîmî at the side of the west wall: and they painted them here (in) the year 1233 of the Martyrs, and they consecrated them with their Church — Remember me, O my God, I (am) Thy servant, the wretched Qummus 'Abd al-Masîh Salîb al-Barâmûsî, and by his (sic) prayers, O Lord vouchsafe to us forgiveness of our sins, and have mercy upon us according to Thy great mercy. To Thee (be) the glory. Year 1632. O Master, I beseech Thee with all my bowels and my mind (or heart) that Thou give to me a share with those who have received a good portion in this Mountain and these holy places, and that Thou grant to me strength to the extent that Thy providence has permitted my existence in this life, that I may visit (them) every year, and that my visit may be in accordance with Thy heavenly glory. Its writer is Bâsîlîûs, Metropolitan of the See of Abû Tîg. Its composition was on the 7th of Babah, 1616, and its scribe was the wretched one. Your son, the Qummus 'Abd al-Masîh Salîb.

hermits. These are : Anbâ Samwîl,[230] Anbâ Yuhannis,[231] Anbâ Nofer,[232] Anbâ Abrâm,[233] Anbâ Girgis,[234] Anbâ Abullû (Apollo),[235] Anbâ Abîb (Apip),[236] Anbâ Mîsaîl,[237] Anbâ Bîgîmî.[238]

The date of the qasr can be determined in part by the very fortunate discovery of a Syriac graffito in the Church of St. Michael which informs us that in 1196 A.D. the church was already in use.[239] The belfry overlooking the monastery walls has at present only one bell. In earlier times there used to be two bells, but the larger one was re-

---

(230) St. Samuel is commemorated on the 8th Kihak. He was born at Tkello in 597. He entered the Monastery of al-Qalamûn, and, at the age of 18, he was ordained deacon. Then he became a monk in Scetis as a disciple of Anbâ Agathûn. At the time of the Persian conquest, Samuel returned to al-Qalamûn, where he witnessed for his faith in many dangerous circumstances. He died in peace.

(231) St. John the Hegumen is commemorated on the 30th Kihak. He was born at the end of the sixth century. He became a monk in the Desert of Scetis, and was captured several times by the Berbers. About 641, he became hegoumenos of the Monastery of St. Macarius. He died about 673. His disciples were SS. Abrâm and Girgis.

(232) St. Onuphrius or Nofer is commemorated on the 16th Hatûr. He was a contemporary of St. Paphnute Cephalas who lived in the first part of the 4th century. Nofer was a hermit who lived in the inner desert and who was discovered by St. Paphnute in the course of his travels.

(233) St. Abraham is commemorated on the 9th Tubah. He lived in the 7th century and gained fame as a disciple of John the Hegumen. He established an intimate friendship with Anbâ Girgis whom he had met accidentally.

(234) St. George is commemorated on the 18th Bashans. At one time a shepherd, he became a monk. As a friend of Anbâ Abrâm the two hermits settled at the Monastery of St. Macarius where they shared one cell. St. George was a monk for fifty-eight years.

(235) St. Apollo is commemorated on the 25th Babeh. He and his friend Anbâ Abîb joined a monastery in which they lived a life of strict asceticism. Later in his life, he was given the responsibility of supervision of several monasteries. He was a contemporary of Abû Maqâr the Egyptian. St. Apollo died the death of a martyr.

(236) St. Abîb is commemorated on the 25th Babeh. He was the friend of Anbâ Abullû. After having joined the monastic life, St. Abîb was made deacon, and, sometime later, he suffered martyrdom.

(237) St. Mîsaîl is commemorated on the 13th Kihak. At an early age he was admitted to the Monastery of al-Qalamûn. He is remembered for his courageous stand against the government forces which wanted to occupy the Monastery of al-Qalamûn.

(238) St. Bigimi is commemorated on the 11th Kihak. As the result of a vision he entered the inner desert, where he led a highly ascetic life, offering 4,800 prayers every day, and fasting for a stretch of 80 days. He was a contemporary of Anbâ Shanûdah who had met Bigimi. His ministry extended as far as the Euphrates.

(239) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, III, 76.

moved by Muhammad ʻAlî to be placed upon the Citadel in Cairo. The monks informed me that the bell broke during the transport and thus never reached its destination.

Among the new features of the monastery are the plantations to the east outside the original walls. This garden was begun in 1925 by Anbâ Abrâm who served as hegoumenos of the monastery and as Bishop of Balyanâ. In 1954, a round shaped water tower was built.

To-day, the monastery is under the jurisdiction of Anbâ Mîkhâîl, the Metropolitan of Asyût. The internal affairs, however, are under the charge of Qummus Athânâsîûs, the sub-hegoumenos of the monastery. Of the 32 monks attached to the Monastery of Abû Maqâr, only 25 percent reside at the monastery. Of those not living in the monastery, some are in charge of the Dependency in Atrîs in the vicinity of Khatâtba.[240]

Because of its historical significance there have been many visitors and tourists to the monastery. Several graffiti in the qasr indicate that the monastery was visited during the past 20 years by a number of Germans and South-Africans.[241] The present visitors' book, which begins on February 28, 1944, shows the following number of overseas visitors.

1952 .... 1 American, 9 French, 9 Italians.
1953 .... 4 Americans, 10 French, 1 Greek.
1954 .... 6 Americans, 7 Germans, 2 Russians.
1955 .... 9 Americans, 10 French, 1 Irish, 5 Italians, 1 New Zealander.
1956 .... 2 Austrians, 2 Ethiopians.

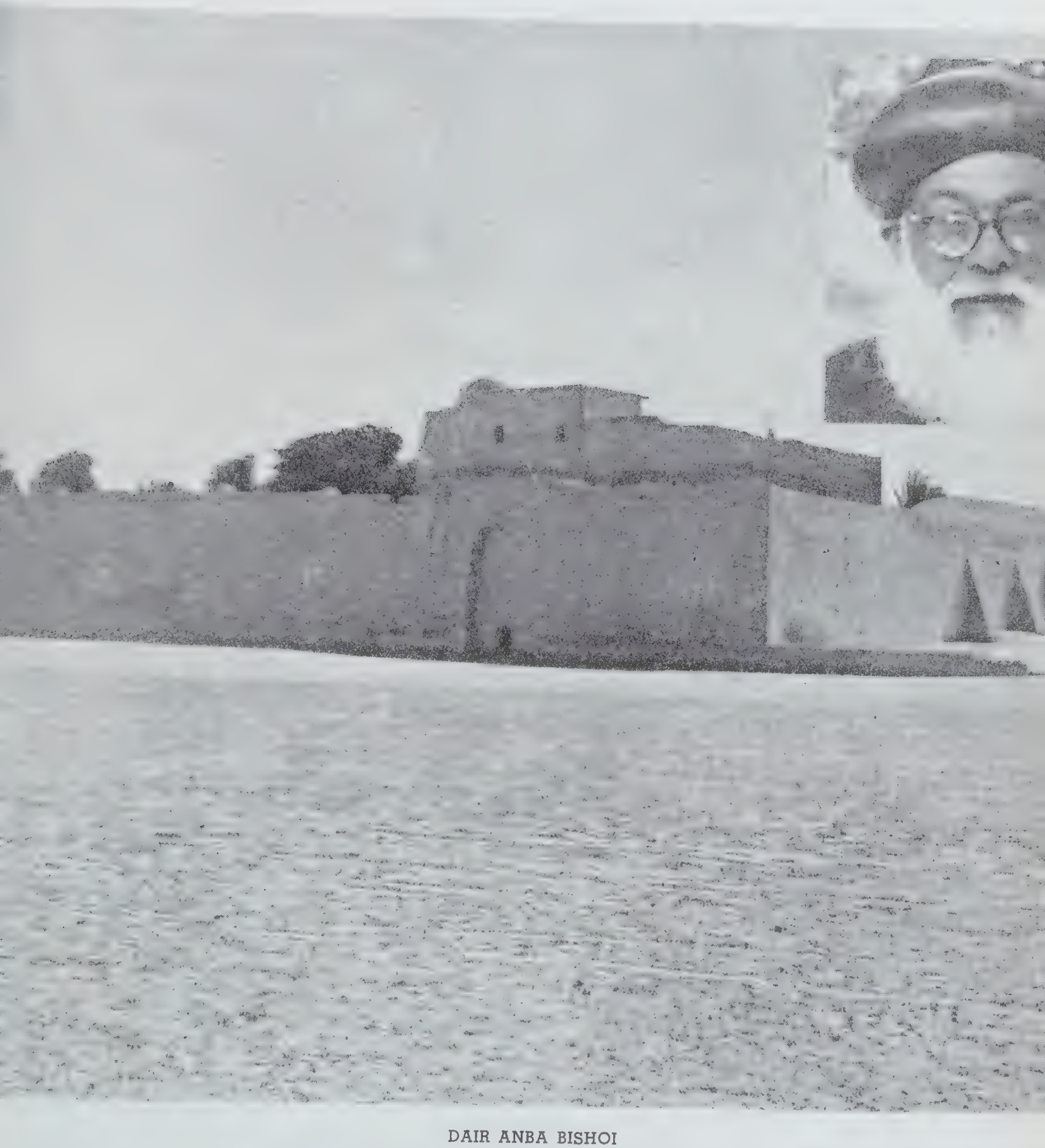
The Monastery of Abû Maqâr is not easily accessible by car, in spite of the road sign on the Cairo-Alexandria Desert Route pointing to the monastery. It is advisable to employ the services of a guide in order to prevent one's car from running into quick-sand. If a guide is not available one ought to follow conscientously the tracks of the supply-trucks as long as they are visible in the ever shifting and ever moving desert.[242]

---

(240) I know of one monk, Abûnâ Tâudrûs al-Maqarî, who was conscripted in the Egyptian Army in April 1958. Monks are not exempted from military service.

(241) The South-African graffiti were written by soldiers in October 1943.

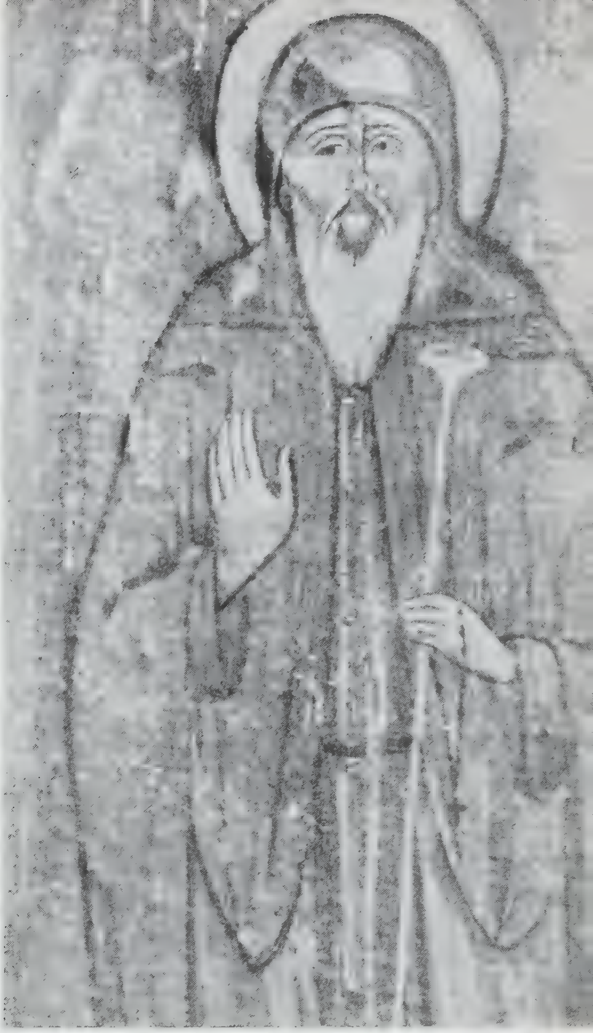
(242) I reached the monastery once with a Volkswagen. On another occasion travelling by Jeep, I had great difficulty in getting even close to the monastery.



DAIR ANBA BISHOI
North wall and gate, with keep showing above the wall.
Insert, Anba Bâsîlîûs, Bishop of Dair Anbâ Bishoî.

Bell tower
and Guesthouse.

Entrance to the
Monastery.



Anbâ Bishoî

Dair Anbâ Bishoî

1. The Life of Anbâ Bishoî

LIKE the majority of Coptic monasteries the foundation of the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî is associated with the life of its Patron Saint. According to the monks of the Dair Anbâ Bishoî and the Dair as-Surîân, [1] Anbâ Bishoî was one of a family of many children. When an Angel of God appeared and called him into the desert, he responded willingly to the call and went to Scetis, where he joined Anbâ Yuhannis (St. John the Short), who had lived by himself for many years. But after a while, Anbâ Yuhannis recommended that Anbâ Bishoî leave him and live by himself in a cave.

While observing the solitary life, Anbâ Bishoî had several visions of the Lord Jesus Christ. One one occasion the Christ passed by his cell, and Anbâ Bishoî stooped down to wash his Master's feet, after which he drank the water as a blessing of the Lord. Another time, some of the monks who had heard about the visions of Anbâ Bishoî approached him with the request to lead them to the Christ. A few days later, after having received a message from the Lord, Anbâ Bishoî instructed the monks to proceed to a certain place in the desert, where the Christ would await them. As they passed on their way, they saw an old man, feeble and worn out, asking to be taken along by the monks. But the monks, anxious to meet the Christ, ignored the pleading of the old man. In the last of the group of monks was Anbâ Bishoî. And when he saw the old man, he had compassion on him, and he carried him along to his destination. When Anbâ Bishoî met the monks at the place where they were to meet the Christ, he straightened his back, and the Stranger disappeared. The Christ whom the monks were seeking had sat at the roadside, waiting to be helped. In their haste for the Christ they had forgotten to be Christians.

---

[1] *Cf.* also the Ethiopian Synax., *Patr. Orient.*, VII, 270-6.

Another story is related by the monks of the Dair as-Surîân which explains the origin of the high tamarind tree in their monastery. A hermit called St. Ephraem had wandered to the Desert of Scetis in order to assure his salvation, for it had been revealed to him that Anbâ Bishoî had found redemption by his solitary life in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. When St. Ephraem the Syrian met Anbâ Bishoî, they realized that they could not communicate with each other, for the visitor spoke only Syriac. God, however, intervened, and they understood each other. St. Ephraem, when visiting Anbâ Bishoî, left his staff outside the cell of Anbâ Bishoî where it took root and grew into a mighty tree. To-day, this tree is still to be seen in the Monastery of the Syrians.[2] The room which houses the printing press has been built around this tree, and under the tree, in front of the printing press, the monks meet every afternoon to say vespers.[3]

In the first sack of the Monastery in 407 A.D., both Anbâ Bishoî and St. John the Short made their escape. The former found refuge in a mountain near the Fayyûm, where he met the anchorite Paul of

---

(2) Evelyn White comments that the story "is probably mere fiction, due to the Syrian monks who from comparatively early times settled in this desert, and who may have considered such a story the best means of establishing their right to be there." Evelyn White, *The Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn*, II, 114-5.

(3) *Cf.* p. 276.

Tammuwah with whom he cultivated a great friendship.[4] St. John the Short went to the Monastery of St. Antony. Three months after Anbâ Bishoî's arrival in the Fayyûm, however, he died. The story goes that Anbâ Athânasiûs, Bishop of the Fayyûm, wanted to remove the bodily remains of the Saint of Scetis to his city, but the ship in which the body was placed refused to sail. Then the anchorite Jeremiah was consulted, and he revealed to the bishop that this had happened because the two friends should not be separated. So, after the death of Paul of Tammuwah, both the bodies were eventually taken to the Fayyûm where they were placed in a shrine at the Monastery of Anbâ Shanûdah.

2. The Sacks

The history of Dair Anbâ Bishoî follows more or less that of the other monasteries in Scetis. Like Dair Abû Maqâr, Dair al-Barâmûs, and Dair Yuhannis Colobus, Dair Anbâ Bishoî suffered the five sacks by the Berbers. Al-Maqrîzî refers especially to the fourth destruction of Dair Anbâ Bishoî which according to him occurred during the patriarchate of Anbâ Andrûnîqûs (Andronicus) (616-623 A.D.).[5] Anbâ Andrûnîqûs was followed by Anbâ Banîâmîn I (623-662 A.D.) who "reconstructed the Monastery of Abû Bishoî and the Monastery of the Virgin of Abû Bishoî, both being located in the Wâdî Habîb." [6]

The fifth sack of Scetis, which occurred in 817 A.D., was as serious as the previous devastations, for the desert monasteries were depopulated and their churches and cells were burnt,[7] and the majority of the monks escaped to other monasteries. Yet fifteen to twenty years later, the Desert of Scetis had become again a haven for anchorites and monks. This was during the patriarchates of Anbâ Ya'qûb (819-830 A.D.) and Anbâ Yûsâb (830-849 A.D.). "When the time of the persecutions had come to an end, they removed the body of St. Bishoî and that of St. Paul Tammuwah to the Monastery of St. Bishoî in the Desert of Scetis. The body of the Saint worked many wonders and miracles, and his body is preserved intact until now without any corruption. The saint stayed for twenty-seven years in the Desert of Scetis... ten years in the Desert of Antenaw (Antinoë) and twenty years in the world before becoming a monk, his whole life was ninety-seven years." [8]

---

[4] We hear of many famous friendships formed between ascetes which are commemorated in the *Synaxarium;* Banina the priest and Naou the deacon, who were beheaded by the Governor Maximian at Edfu. Apip and Apollo, who together entered a monastery and suffered martyrdom. Dioscorus and Aesculapius were ascetes in the Desert of Achmim and were martyred by the Governor Arianus. George and Abraham of Dair Abû Maqâr. The cell shared by these two monks long remained one of the sights of the Desert of Scetis and was still revered when the *Synaxarium* was compiled in the 14th century. Menas and Michael of the Monastery of St. Antony. These two friends later went to the Dair Abû Maqâr, where they became disciples of George and Abraham. Mercurius and Ephraem were monks in the Thebaid and were martyred by the Arian Emperor Constantius. Ptolemy and Zacharias of Sakha became monks in the Monastery of St. Colobos. Paul and Timath, who dwelt in the Desert of Scetis.

[5] The *Synaxarium* places the event during the patriarchate of Anbâ Dîmîânûs.

[6] Wüstenfeld, *Maqrizi's Geschichte der Copten,* 48.

[7] *Cf.* p. 131.

The violent destructions of the monasteries from the fifth to the ninth century were due to the marauding nature of the Berbers, and not from religious fanaticism. The most serious persecution of the Christians in the Middle Ages occurred during the patriarchate of of Anbâ Zakhârîâs (1004-1032) in the Fatimid caliphate of al-Hâkim bi 'Amr 'illah (996-1021). As often occurred, this persecution was provoked by a discontented Christian. The caliph is said to have been excited against the Christians by a certain monk's ambition for a high ecclesiastical office.[9] Abûnâ Yuhannis, "habitantis in Cella ad sanctum Macarium", had gone in person to the patriarch and requested that he should be appointed to one of the vacant dioceses. But the council of the bishops rejected John's request, and the monk went to Cairo to complain to the caliph. Thereupon the caliph issued letters to the patriarch advising him to grant the monk's request. At that time, however, Anbâ Zakhârîâs, the patriarch, had gone to the monasteries in Scetis where he remained for the period of nine years. Thus he had turned over the whole matter to the son of his brother, who was Anbâ Khâîl, the Bishop of Sakhâ, and who was an adversary of John the monk. Being determined that John should not be promoted, he hired a party of Arabs and gave him up to them, and they stoned him and cast him into a dry well, but John found a cave at the bottom of the pit into which he crept, and was thus saved from the shower of stones which his assailants rained upon him. Eventually John escaped and related his experience to the patriarch. A little while

---

(8) Ethiopian Synaxarium, *Patr. Orient.*, VII, 270-6. Anbâ Bishoî is commemorated on the 8th of Hamle or July 15; Synax., *Patr. Orient.*, I, 321-3. Anbâ Bishoî is commemorated in the Jacobite Synax., on the 7th of Babah.

(9) *Hist. Patr.*, II, II, 181-3, 207-8. Renaudotius, *Historia Patriarcharum Alexandrinorum Jacobitarum...*, 388 f. Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages*, 127 f.

later, when two dioceses had become vacant and had been filled, presumably by wealthier candidates, John could no longer forego his revenge and sent a letter to al-Hâkim.

The patriarch was immediately thrown into prison. But when he was cast to the lions, God changed their nature for him and protected him from them. "Al-Hâkim ordered the lions to be starved again, and that, when their hunger became violent, a sheep should be slain and that the patriarch should be divested of his clothing, and that his body should be smeared with sheep's blood, and that the lions should be set loose upon him." [10] But as in the case of Daniel [11] the lions did not hurt the patriarch and Anbâ Zakhârîâs regained his liberty.

This persecution of the Christian population was particularly severe. "In 1005 A.D. a general order was issued for the destruction of all Christian churches and the confiscation of their land and property. The Christians were offered the choice of becoming Muslims, or leaving the country, or else wearing a heavy cross as a badge of their degradation." [12] As the *History of the Patriarchs* relates: "Of these nine years during which there was chastisement from the Lord, there were three years during which no one was able to make the oblation in Egypt, except in the monasteries alone." [13] The monasteries in the Desert of Scetis had enjoyed an immunity which attracted many Christians, and we hear that with the patriarch "most of the Christians also used to enter the desert twice in the year, namely at the Feast of the Epiphany and the Feast of the Resurrection which is Easter. They used to long for the Eucharist, as a babe longs for the milk of its mother's breast." [14] The description in the *History of the Patriarchs* suggests that the only places of worship which remained unmolested were the desert monasteries.

The end of al-Hâkim's life is wrapped in deep mystery. It is thought he was assassinated during one of his nocturnal expeditions to the Mokattam heights, but since his corpse was never discovered, his followers believed that he had been caught up into heaven, and would re-appear on the earth at some future time. Bar-Hebraeus, on the other hand, states that he had departed into the Desert of Scetis, became a monk, and ended his life there, and that the Christ appeared to him, as to St. Paul.[15]

---

(10) *Hist. Patr.*, II, II, 193.

(11) *Daniel* 6: 22.

(12) Lane-Poole, *op. cit.*, 127; Wüstenfeld, *op. cit.*, 63 ff.

(13) *Hist. Patr.*, II, II, 204.

(14) *Ibid.*, 201.

(15) Budge, *Bar Hebraeus*, I, 189.

The numerous stories about the saintly Bessus, a monk of the Monastery of St. John Kame, belong to this period. That the influence of this desert Saint was not limited to his own monastery is evident from the records. A story related by the deacon Abû Habîb Mikhâîl ibn Badîr al-Damanhûrî deals with two monks from the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî, who were quarrelling between themselves. They went to Bessus to be reconciled. One of them consented to be reconciled but the other refused to obey the monk. Then, after three days, the disobedient monk returned to Bessus, suffering from leprosy. A miracle, however, cleansed this once disobedient, but now penitent monk. That Bessus was well known among the monks of Dair Anbâ Bishoî is also evident from the remark in the *History of the Patriarchs,* that Sanhût, the deacon, related many miracles concerning this saintly Bessus, the explanations of which would be too long to enumerate.[16] For that matter, it was this deacon, Sanhût of the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî, who, after the death of Anbâ Ya'qûb, Bishop of Cairo, was consecrated by Anbâ Kîrillus as bishop of the vacant see.[17]

3. From the 11th to the 16th Century

During the patriarchate of Anbâ Kîrillus II (1078-1092), Mawhûb, the deacon of Alexandria, visited the Desert of Scetis to make an inventory of its inhabitants. At that time, the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî with its 40 monks had only one tenth of the number of monks attached to the Monastery of Abû Maqâr.[18]

In his work *Al-Masalik wa 'l-Mamalîk*, 'Abd Allah ibn al-Aziz ibn Abî Mûsâ Abû 'Ubaid al-Bakrî, an Arab author of the 11th century, tells about the monasteries of the Western Desert, while describing a journey from Tarnût to Barqa. "From Tarnût one proceeds to al-Mûna which consists of three abandoned villages, the buildings of which are still existing. There one can see numerous magnificent castles located in a sandy desert, where caravans run the risk of being attacked by the Arab nomads. These castles which are built very strongly, have walls of an extraordinary height, and nearly all of these walls are built on vaults, and some of them are inhabited by Christian monks. Al-

---

(16) *Hist. Patr.*, II, III, 295.

(17) *Ibid.*, 347.

(18) "In the aforesaid desert there were at that time about 700 monks of whom there were 400 in the Monastery of Abba Macarius, 165 in the Monastery of Abba Yohannes, 25 in the Monastery of Abba Kame, 20 in the Monastery of Baramus, 40 in the Monastery of Abba Pshoi, 60 in the Monastery of the Syrians, and two monks in the Cave of Abba Moses — a Syrian and a Copt — besides the anchorities who we did not see and did not know." *Hist. Patr.*, II, II, 242.

Mûna has several wells which produce fresh water but in small quantity." [19] This region is certainly within the vicinity of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn.[20] The region of al-Mûna is mentioned in the *History of the Patriarchs* where we read that Anbâ Banîâmîn (Benjamin) I (623-662 A.D.) journeyed from Tubah to Tarûgah, and from there he reached the desert of al-Mûna, which is that of Abba Isaac, near the mountains of Barnûg, where he remained for two days after which he took leave and turned to the Monastery of al-Barâmûs.

In the end of the 13th century, the great Ethiopian saint, Takla Haymanot, visited Egypt and Palestine. In the *Ethiopian Synaxar* and in the *Life of Takla Haymanot* we read that the Saint worshipped at all holy places in Palestine and afterwards visited the monks in the Desert of Scetis. For his frequent pilgrimages to Jerusalem, St. Takla Haymanot was rebuked by the Patriarch of Alexandria, who told him that he would be better occupied in founding a monastery, than in wandering through various countries.[21]

From the 14th to the 16th century other factors than those of marauding Berbers were at work which undermined the stability of the desert monasteries. Throughout this period, the Monastery of Abû Maqâr had remained in the foreground, because of its traditional association with the election and subsequent enthronement of the patriarch. Of the other monasteries, little is known. In 1330 A.D., the 82nd patriarch, Benjamin II (1327-1339) determined to visit the monasteries. The cause of his interest apparently was the dangerous state into which

---

(19) Abû 'Ubaid al-Bakrî, *Al-Masalik, wa 'l-Mamalik,* quoted by Toussoun, *Etude sur le Wadi Natroun,* 35.

(20) Al-Bakrî, writing sometime between 1050 and 1068 A.D. identifies al-Mûna with al-Mînî, al-Mena, and Kaufmann and Cauwenberg identified the site with Abû Mînâ. Both, al-Bakrî *(Description de l'Afrique Septentrionale par el-Bakri,* transl. MacGuckin de Slane) and Yakûbi *(Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum,* VII, 342) gave the first stages of the caravan route from Fustât to the West as follows: At-Terrâna — al-Mûna — Dair Abû Mînâ — Dat al-Humâm. Butler (*The Arab Conquest of Egypt,* 177) wrote, that al-Mûna lay at the intersection of the ways from Alexandria to the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn and from at-Terrâna to Barca. De Cosson after studying all available evidence, places al-Mûna between 18 and 19 kilometres south-west of al-Barnûgî. It also stands mid-way between at-Terrâna and Abû Mînâ, on a direct line at-Terrâna and Turûga, and finally on a fairly direct line between al-Barnûgî and Dair al-Barâmûs. *Cf.* De Cosson, "The Desert City of El Muna."

(21) *Ethiop. Synax.,* 14 Nahassé, Budge IV, 1245. According to Budge, whose date is hopelessly out, Takla Haymanot visited Jerusalem between 735 and 766 A.D. when he was 69 or 70 years of age. Budge, *The Life of Takla Haymanot,* I, LII, LXI.

the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî had fallen. Ants had destroyed much of the woodwork of the monastery, and the buildings threatened to collapse. The patriarch, fearing that the monks might be dispersed set out to the monastery with the determination to save it from destruction. After having visited the other monasteries—by this time the number had increased to eight—the patriarch "set about the restoration which he had planned."[22] In memory of the restoration work of the patriarch, the monks placed his bodily remains in their church, the Church of Anbâ Bishoî. There, in the south-west corner of the south aisle still stands the feretory of Anbâ Banîâmîn II. Ten years after the visit of Anbâ Banîâmîn II, Anbâ Butrus V (1340-1346) visited the monasteries, and stayed at the Dair Abû Maqâr for the consecration of the chrism.[23]

During the first half of the 14th century the great Arab geographer Ibn Fadl 'Allah al-'Umarî (died 1347) accompanied the Sultan of Egypt al-Malik an-Nâsir Muhammad Ibn Qalawûn, on a journey to the Valley of Natrûn. The following is his brief report: "Then seven convents are situated in Lower Egypt, in the West and spread over the territory which separates the Buhairah from the Fayyûm. They are found in an isolated place amid the sand and salty marshes amidst of a thirsty and tiring plain because of its very dryness. Its inhabitants drink water from cisterns or wells and they live in extreme privation. The Christians look after their needs and present them with precious gifts. The Coptic writers and the officers of the Sultan surround them with care in order to find a place of retreat in case of disgrace. I do not know the particular history of these convents nor do I know of verses composed in their honour to cite. But I have depended on hearsay about their fame and the spread of their renown." [24]

The 14th century was to prove very disastrous for the monasteries in the Desert of Scetis. During the reign of Sultan an-Nâsir ad-Dîn Hasan, who succeeded, as the seventh son of his father, an-Nâsir ibn Qalawûn, the *Black Death* spread over Europe and the Middle East, and reduced Egypt to a desperate state. It is recorded that 10,000 to 20,000 people died in Cairo in a single day, cattle murrain and fruit disease accompanied the plague, the fish of the river were poisoned, cities emptied and the land laid waste.[25] That this state of affairs should have affected the desert monasteries was to be expected. We

---

(22) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 395-6.

(23) *Ibid.*, 397.

(24) Ibn Fadl 'Allah al-'Umari, *Masâlik al-Absar fî Mamalîk al-Amsar*, I., 374.

(25) Lane-Poole, *op. cit.*, 320.

know that the situation in the Desert of Scetis had seriously deteriorated by the beginning of the 15th century. The desert that at one time, according to Maqrîzî, was the home of 100 monasteries, harboured merely seven institutions in 1442. Apart from the patriarchal Monastery of Abû Maqâr, Maqrîzî mentions the Monastery of Abû Yuhannis al-Qasîr which was supposed to have been built by Constantinus, the son of the Empress Helena. At one time many monks inhabited this monastery, "though now there are only three monks left."[26] The Monastery of Anbâ Yuhannis Kame and the Monastery of St. Elias, which belonged to the Ethiopians, were both destroyed; worms had eaten up the woodwork, and, consequently, they collapsed. Furthermore, the Monastery of Anbâ Nûb and that of the Armenians were destroyed. The Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî survived the destructions of its surrounding monasteries because it was a very large monastery.[27] The seventh monastery mentioned in the list of Maqrîzî is that of al-Barâmûs.[28]

4. The 17th and 18th Century Travellers

The first of the French travellers to come to Egypt and who mentioned the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî was Fr. J. Coppin who also served as French representative to the Holy Places. He writes in 1638, that the "Monastery of Ambacioche" was the "second convent", after having mentioned that of St. Macarius.[29] The Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî is connected with that of Abû Maqâr by the "Way of the Angels". This is a path which the hermits used on Sundays to attend the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Furthermore Fr. Coppin mentions a little dome which was part of the Church of St. John the Short, as well as a certain tree which was given the name of Shagarat at-Ta'ah, that is to say, the Tree of Obedience. At this time, twenty monks used to live within the walls of the monastery, and the church, which appeared as a beautiful building was consecrated in honour to the Blessed Virgin Mary.[30]

Thévenot, who was in Egypt in 1657, gives a very instructive description of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn monasteries and adds to it his advice on how to get there, though he never went himself. "One should also see the Deserts of St. Macharius, where there are four monasteries, of St. Macharius, the Syrians, Balsarion, and of our Lady".[31] As to the

---

(26) Wüstenfeld, *op. cit.*, 111.

(27) *Ibid.*

(28) *Cf.* p. 136.

(29) Coppin, *Relation des Voyages faits dans la Turquie, la Thebaide et la Barbarie*, 344.

(30) *Ibid.*

(31) Thévenot, *The Travels of Monsieur de Thévenot into the Levant*, I, 242.

price, Thévenot offered the following suggestion : "You must endeavour to agree as cheap as you can, and it must be made in presence of the Cachef, before you set out, for if you delay till you come back, they'll exact the more. The hire commonly for going out and coming is two piastres for each Horse or Camel.... besides three or four piastres for every horseman that accompanies you."[32] Furthermore, Thévenot made mention of a certain village called Dris (Atrîs), "where the monks have a house".[33] In his description of the monasteries, he repeats Fr. Coppin's observation of the "Angels' Way" which connects the Monastery of Abû Maqâr with the Monastery of Anbà Bishoî, and the several ruins of the monasteries that are situated on the way. "It is not good to follow that "Angels' Way" nor to be too curious in asking questions of the Arabs about it, for then they would presently conclude, that you were come to the Mountain to search for some treasure hid in it, which they fancy the Franks know of. Among these old buildings you see the ruins of a monastery, built in honour of St. John the Short, and is called Juhanna el Kasir, where there is still a dome, and the dry Rod, which being watered by that good Hermit, at the command of his Superior, was changed into a fair Tree, which is to be seen at this day, as a monument of the merit of Obedience.[34] The Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî is the pleasantest of all the four, for it has a fair church, a lovely garden, and good water, with a big tower in it. There were a great many holy bodies therein, which on Palm Sunday 1656 were burnt by a spark that fell from a taper that had been left burning there ; whereupon the monks being vexed that they had lost their saints, gave it out that they had been carried away by a French merchant, who came into those quarters to buy natron. But finding that the device would not take, though it would cost the merchant money, they raised some dead bodies and brought them into their church, publishing that they were the bodies of their saints, which had escaped out of the French ship, and were come back to their church." [35]

In 1672, fifteen years after Thévenot's account of the monasteries of the Desert of Scetis, Fr. Johann Michael Wansleben planned his journey to the "Desert de Saint Macaire." [36] Like his predecessors, Wansleben mentioned the "Way of Angels" between the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî and Abû Maqâr. "On y voit entre les Monastères de Saint-

---

(32) *Ibid.*

(33) *Ibid.*

(34) *Ibid.*, 243.

(35) *Ibid.*

(36) Wansleben, *Nouvelle Relation en forme de Journal, d'un voyage fait en Egypte en 1672 et 1673*, 213-229.

Macaire, celui d'Anbâ Bishoî, et dela plus avant dans le désert, une longue suite de petits marceaux de terre, éloignez l'un de l'autre d'un pas, faits en façon de chemin, lesquels, à ce que les Religieux disent, ont été faits par les Anges...." [37] From an ancient Arabic manuscript Wansleben concludes that the desert once was the home of seven monasteries : Saint Macaire, Saint Jean le petit, surnommé l'Igumene, Anbâ Bishoî, Saint Massime et Timothée, Anbâ Moïse surnommé le Noir, Anbâ Kamé, Sainte Vierge des Syriens, and contained three hundred habitations of hermits and solitaries. "But of all these monasteries, only two are of any importance, the Monastery of the Syrians, and that of Anbâ Bishoî. They had good water." [38] Again, like Fr. Coppin and Thévenot, Wansleben referred to the Tree of Obedience, which the monks call still to-day "Scieigiaret ittaa".[39]

The next traveller to give us information about the state of the monasteries in the 17th century was Robert Huntingdon, who served as chaplain to the Levant Company before he became Bishop of Raphoe in Ireland.[40] He found the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî less ruinous than the other monasteries, and added that the refectory was furnished with stone seats and a table to accommodate from fifty to sixty persons.[41]

In December 1712, Fr. Claude Sicard, after visiting the monks of the neighbouring Monastery of the Syrians, paid a visit to the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî, where he found only four monks present. But his very brief description suggests that he visited the monastery merely in passing.[42]

The next visitor to mention the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî was Le Sieur Granger who called the monastery "Deir Labiat". Granger, who visited the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn in 1730, was neither interested in architecture, archaeology nor in the monks, which explains his superficial reference to the Coptic monasteries. His primary concern was that of natural history for which the salt lakes offered a worthy project for study.[43]

In 1765, the historian and scholar al-Warthilanî al-Husain ibn Muhammad as-Saîd went on a pilgrimage from Morocco to Mecca. In his book *Nuzhat al-Anzar fi Badl 'Ilm at-Târîkh wa 'l-Akhbar* he relates his experiences.

---

(37) *Ibid.*, 227.

(38) *Ibid.*, 228.

(39) *Ibid.*

(40) *Huntingtoni epistolae*, ed. Smith, quoted by Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 240.

(41) *Ibid.*

(42) Sicard, *Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses...* III, 178.

(43) Granger, *Relation du Voyage fait en Egypte, en l'année 1730*, 179.

"We then left as-Shammama in the direction of the Wâdî al-Ruhbân, which is the valley of the monks. It is a large and long valley where one finds castles or monasteries for Christian monks who have come from Egypt in order to give themselves up to the worship of God. In Egypt there are Christian communities which pay tribute to the Sultan. The Wâdî al-Ruhbân is a large sandy valley where palm trees, plenty of water, and divers species of wild beasts as well as oxen, ostriches, gazelles, wild cows and game can be found. This valley was given to the monks because it offers refuge to the Christian monks who settle in groups in their respective monasteries and no stranger is admitted. They possess neither land nor herds. The Christian 'Dhimmî' of Egypt are in contact with them. They send them their *ex-voti* and their charities which consist of food supplies and clothes. It is from there that the road goes on from Egypt to Aougela.'"[44]

Two years later, al-Warthilanî returned from his pilgrimage and passed by the Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn again. "Then we left in the morning and continued our route until we arrived very near the Qasr or monastery which offers shelter to the Christians, that is the monks. Having arrived at the door of the monastery, we saw them (the monks) appearing and they began to talk with us. They asked us for news from Egypt and its inhabitants. We told them of all that had happened to the inhabitants of Egypt and Salih Bey who was in Upper Egypt, and we informed them that a battle had taken place between them. Its result was the routing of the troops of Egypt who then left by boats. We stayed in the empty qasr which was situated at the very end of the monastery where we, the sons of Sidî Muhammad al-Hag, entered and where we spent a wonderful night."[45] If this hospitable attitude to the Mecca pilgrims was a matter of Christian charity or agreement reached before hand is difficult to ascertain. We do know that the Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn were obliged to assist pilgrims to Mecca by providing for them food and drink. This is stated in the "Letter of Protection" which Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib was supposed to have issued to the Copts.[46]

On the 14th of January of 1778, C.S. Sonnini "passed in front of one of these monasteries, called Anbâ Bishoî, which is but a few paces from that we had quitted (Dair as-Surîân), the monks were waiting

---

(44) Al-Warthilanî, *Nuzhat al-Anzar*, 243, 244, 606, quoted by Toussoun, *Etude sur le Wadi Natroun*, 45-46.

(45) *Ibid.*

(46) A copy of this document is in the Münchener Staatsbibliothek, Cod. arab. 210. Moritz, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Sinaiklosters im Mittelalter*, 21-23.

for me at the gate ; they importuned me to go in for a moment, and, in order to determine me, they said that they were in possession of the body of a saint, which was as fresh and florid as if still alive. They appeared very much offended at my resisting such an attraction, but the true cause of the discontent they expressed was the disappointment of the money which they expected to obtain from my visit." [47]

At the time of General Antoine Andréossy's visit to the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî in January 1799, twelve monks resided in it. In his observations on the monasteries, the French general related a rather interesting custom which was practised by the Muslims of the neighbourhood. When one of the Muslims intends to build a pigeon-house, he sends a letter and a gift to the good monks of the monastery who, in return, give him a "billet mystique" which on being placed in the pigeon-house insures its prosperity.[48]

5. The 17th, 18th, and 19th Century Cartographers

From the 17th century onwards, cartographers have made use of the geographical material supplied to them by travellers, whether scientists or priests. The Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn are found mentioned in almost all maps of Egypt, from the period beginning with the middle of the 17th century. The *Nova Aegypti Tabula* identifies the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn with S. Antonii Desertum,[49] and places the Monasterium S. Macarii on the Mediterranean coast in the vicinity of Alexandria.[50] Not much more exactness is provided by Michalet's *Les Déserts d'Egypte, de Thébaide d'Arabie, de Syrie & etc., où sont exactement marquez les Lieux habitez par les Sainctes Pères des Deserts.* This map, which claims to give the proper positions of the caves and sites of the Desert Fathers, though very colourful and beautifully executed, does not merit from a geographical point of view, any serious attention. The work of a pious artist, Michalet's map (1693) is of no help for the study of Coptic monasticism. *Schenk's Aegypti Recentior descriptio : Aegyptis & Jurcis, Elchibith : Arabibus, Mesre & Misri : Hebrais, Mitsraim* of *ca.* 1700 also places S. Antonii in S. Macarii

---

(47) Sonnini, *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt*, 368.

(48) Andréossy in *Description de l'Egypte*, I, 292.

(49) A similar error is made by the Scribe Polonais Simeon (1584-1640). He writes: "The Monastery of St. Antony is magnificient and famous. Quite close, there is a mountain, from which mineral salt is extracted, which is mixed with food. The other monastery is that of St. Macarius the Hermit, whose venerated body is preserved in a reliquary." Simeon, *Iténeraire, Annales et Mémoires*, 23.

(50) This may be a production by Willem Janscon Blaue (1571-1638).

Desertum (Wâdî 'n-Natrûn). One of the first maps to give fairly correct positions for all four Wâdî 'n-Natrûn monasteries, is Lotter's *Le cours entier du grand et fameux Nil appellé la Rivière de l'Egypte dans l'Ecriture Sainte avec la Basse et la Haute Egypte.* This map also mentions the small villages of Quafredaoud, Teranie and Etris (Atrîs). Richard Pococke who visited Egypt in and around 1737, provided important cartographical information which appears on Covens et Mortier's map *Carte de l'Egypte et le cours du Nil.* The four Wâdî 'n-Natrûn monasteries are given a relatively correct position. The Monastery of al-Barâmûs appears under the name Monasterium S. Paesii.[51] A few years later, in 1753, Robert de Vaugondy published his *Carte de l'Egypte Ancienne et Moderne,* largely based upon the information provided by Pococke's map. On this map, the Monastery of al-Barâmûs is called the Monastery of S. Paes (of the Holy Son), and the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî is omitted. Almost identical with regard to the position and the names of the monasteries is Bonne's *Carte de l'Egypte Ancienne et Moderne* which was published by Lattré in 1762.

The most famous cartographers of the 18th century were Guillaume Delisle and J.B. Bourguignon d'Anville, who acquired a wealth of information for their compilations of maps. B. d'Anville (1697-1782) published in 1765 a map entitled *Egypt called in the Country of Missir.* Three monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn are mentioned, but their respective sites are badly confused. The shrine of Sitt Dimîânah is called Gemiana. The two villages of Terane and Etris (Atrîs) are correctly placed. Samuel Dunn's *Ancient and Modern Egypt* (1786) again borrows heavily from Vaugondy and Bonne, at least as far as the naming and the position of the monasteries are concerned. The Monastery of al-Barâmûs is called S. Paes, and the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî is omitted. The Monasteries of St. Antony and St. Paul are in their proper positions. Almost identical to Dunn's map is that of Delineato. His *l'Egitto Antico e Moderno* appeared in 1798, and it lists three of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn monasteries : S. Paes, Monastero dai Siriaci and S. Macario ; while John Wallis' *A Map of the Mouths of the Nile, with the scene of action in Egypt* [52] omits all the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn monasteries, and merely mentions St. Geminian's Monastery.

One of the first German maps to give the position of the four Wâdî 'n-Natrûn monasteries is F.L. Güssefeld's *Charte von Aegypten* (1800),

---

(51) For this name I suggest that it may be a latinized form (plural) of παῖς and refers to the two sons Maximus and Dometius of al-Barâmûs.

(52) This refers to the French invasion of Egypt.

printed by Homann. J.B. Homann (d. 1724) founded a geographical establishment in 1702, which depended at first upon copies of British and French maps. Unfortunately, Güssefeld's map confuses the position of the two Red Sea monasteries, and St. Paul's Monastery appears north of St. Antony's, an error which was copied later by W.M. Leake in his *Map of Egypt* (1818). Enouy's map, which was compiled from draughts of the Scientific Institute in Cairo in 1800, mentions the Lake of Natron, but not the monasteries. The shrine of Sitt Dimîânâh is called Gemiane.

An interesting geographica is provided by L.S. de la Rochette's *Lower Egypt and the adjacent Desert with a part of Palestine* (1802). He not only gives the positions of the monasteries, but also the route which Sonnini took in January 1778, when he went from Abûkîr to Dair al-Barâmûs. He also marks the annual route of the Natron camel-caravans, which was followed by Browne in 1792, and by Andréossy in 1799. Furthermore, he indicates the route followed by pilgrims coming from Barqa and travelling via Dair al-Barâmûs to Terrâna. On this map, the Monastery of Abû Maqâr is called "Amba Monguar". John Cary's *A new Map of Egypt* (1805) gives the same detailed information as that of de la Rochette. Lapie's *Carte Historique, Physique and Positique de l'Egypte* also provides the reader with the routes leading from Terrâna to the Covent d'el-Baramous and from Mit Salameh to the Convent de S. Macaire. The second Arrowsmith map of Egypt appeared in 1832. It shows the caravan routes from "Baramous Greek Convent" to Terrâna, and the routes from "Amba Bicoi" and the "Conv. of St. Macarius" to Mit Salameh. Arrowsmith also gives the route of Pacho's visit to Dair Anbâ Bishoî in 1825. Monastery ruins are indicated in the "Wady Moileh", no doubt those of Dair Anbâ Samwîl.

6. The 19th and 20th Century Travellers

In 1820, we hear of a large army consisting of 1,300 men and commanded by Husain Bey Shamishara passing by the monasteries in the Desert of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. Muhammad 'Ali, who had invaded the Sûdân, felt the need to protect his western flank and thus commissioned this large force to cross the desert via the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn and the Oasis of Gara and to occupy the Oasis of Siwa.[53]

---

(53) Belgrave, *Siwa, the Oasis of Jupiter Ammon,* 102. The number of men commanded by Husain Bey, the governor of the Buhairah Province, consisted of 400 Bachi-bouzoucks (irregular troops), 200 Bedouins of Awlad 'Alî and 100 Bedouins of al-Gamai'at tribe. Mustapha Pasha Mahir, "L'Oasis de Siouah," *Bull. Soc. Sult. de Géographie,* IX, 1919, 55.

On the 25th of November 1820, Heinrich Freiherr von Minutoli left the camp of the Jovaisi and passed the monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. He referred to the monasteries as "Labiat,[54] Ou Serian and Aboumakar". Though he had intended to visit the monasteries, he gave up his plan, when he was informed that the inhabitants were rather rough and without any "Geisteskultur". Further, he felt that apart from ascetic literature, the monasteries could not be of any interest, at least for him.[55]

During the years 1835 and 1841, Russegger, the Austrian scholar of natural history and science, visited Egypt as part of a tour through Europe, Asia and Africa. Of the four monasteries in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn he mentions only two, that called "Labiat" which is to be identified with the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî, and that of "U Serian", which is Dair as-Surîân.[56]

In 1837, after Lord Curzon had left the Monastery of al-Barâmûs, he established his headquarters in the Monastery of the Syrians from where he visited the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî and that of "Abou Magar". Both monasteries were at the time of his visit inhabited only by three or four monks who conducted the services in their respective churches.[57]

In January 1839, Dr. Tattam and his step-daughter, Miss Platt, visited the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî. Here, Dr. Tattam examined the books of the Monastery, "which were about 150 in number, and all Arabic and Coptic liturgies, with the exception of one fine copy of the Four Gospels in Coptic, and an old imperfect copy of the Book of Genesis. On the ground floor (of the qasr) was a large vaulted apartment, very lofty, with arches at each end, perfectly dark, and so strewn with loose leaves of old Liturgies, that scarcely a portion of the floor was visible. And here we were all fully occupied in making diligent search with each a lighted taper, and a stick to turn up old fragments. In some parts, the *MSS,* lay a quarter of a yard deep, and

---

(54) Ninety years prior to Minutoli's visit, Granger also referred to the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî as the Deir Labiat, which means the white monastery.

(55) Minutoli, *Reise zum Tempel des Jupiter Ammon in der Lybischen Wüste,* 195. We read a similar disinterest in the monasteries in Graul's *Reise durch Egypten,* who in 1853 passed the town Terrânah. Hearing of the four monasteries, he does not feel the slightest enthusiasm to visit them. Graul, *op. cit.,* 242.

(56) Russegger, *Reisen in Europa, Asien und Africa,* I, 189.

(57) Curzon, *Visits to the Monasteries in the Levant,* 84.

the amazing quantity of dust was almost choking, accompanied by a damp and fetid smell, nearly as bad as in the Tombs of the Kings... We were afterwards conducted to the top of the monastery, which is flat-roofed, by a broad flight of stone steps, unenclosed, and between the outer wall and the tower."[58]

In 1844, the German scholar, Konstantin v. Tischendorf, paid a visit to the monks of the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî. Here he found only four monks inhabiting the monastery. "The superior was an old man of 120 years of age, who sits all day long upon a cross bench, and sings aloud both day and night. To this old man heaven hangs down its holy lamps so low into the narrow valley of the earth, that his eyes, already closed to the world, see God only, and his lips do nothing but pray. I visited him in his cell the instant I heard his unceasing prayer. Upon my departure from the monastery, he came forth, supported by his staff, and appeared to me to speak with perfect intelligence. A benediction from these aged lips deeply affected me."[59]

When the German traveller, Dr. Wilhelm Junkers, knocked at the doors of Dair Anbâ Bishoî in November 1875, he was not permitted entry. As he heard later, a stranger had stolen manuscripts from the library which caused the seven monks of the monastery to be justifiably frightened of European visitors.[60]

In 1881, after leaving the Monastery of the Syrians, the Frs. Jullien, Nourrit and Noory and Mr. Palamarie visited the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî, which to them was the largest of the four monasteries in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, and which also could boast of having the best water.[61] According to Fr. Jullien, the origin of the monastery went back to two brothers, Isaiah and Paese, who were the sons of a wealthy merchant. Isaiah's body, Fr. Jullien continues, is still preserved in the church that bears his name. As in the case of their visit to the Monastery of al-Barâmûs, they engaged in doctrinal conversations with the desert monks, and Fr. Jullien records that the acceptance of the doctrine of the two natures of Christ was no problem to the Coptic monks, whereas the doctrine of the supremacy of the Pope caused only horror in the minds of the desert fathers.[62]

---

(58) Platt, *Journal of a Tour through Egypt*, I, 279.

(59) Tischendorf, *Travels in the East*, 53.

(60) Junkers, *Reisen in Afrika 1875-1886*, I, 44.

(61) Jullien, *L'Egypte, Souvenirs Bibliques et Chrétiens*, 46.

(62) *Ibid.*

Two years later in 1883, Alfred Butler coming from the Monastery of Abû Maqâr visited the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî. This is his record of his impressions. "We had heard that Anbâ Bishoî contained the best well of water of all the four monasteries, and we resolved therefore to make it our headquarters for the remainder of our visit, — a decision which we had no cause to repent. We found our arrival was not expected: the iron-plated postern was closed, and we had to ring some time at the bell, which is hung on the convent wall and sounded by a cord swinging loose below."[63] Butler then continues his descripton of the churches. The principal church, which bears the name of Anbâ Bishoî, is an extremely fine building, the main features of which are of the basilican order, and the two satellite chapels or churches which open out from the choir. That at the north side is dedicated to al-'Adhrâ, and contains the bones of Anbâ Bishoî in a reliquary, the other on the south side is larger, and is covered with a most magnificent dome: the altar, which is dedicated to Abiskhairon,[64] has for its slab a shallow marble tray of oblong form. A narrow passage north of the altar leads to the baptistry, which lies adjoining the chapel of the east: it contains a plain round font of the usual type, with a drain at the bottom to carry off the water. The qasr contains little of interest except a series of lofty vaulted chambers, which judging from the fragments of Coptic and Arabic volumes scattered about the floor, once served as the convent library. The hegoumenos of the monastery informed Butler that the monastery was fifteen hundred years old, but that the buildings had been largely repaired about a century ago.[65]

On his return from the Oasis of Siwa in April 1896, the Honorable Arthur Silva White made a slight detour, in order to visit the monasteries of the Syrians and that of Anbâ Bishoî. These then were his impressions: "There are twenty monks at Surîânî and fourteen at Bishoî. The former is the most interesting of the three monasteries I visited in the Natron Valley and certainly looked the most prosperous. It was here that the so-called Syrian library was discovered. Both monasteries have good gardens and wells nearly 100 ft. deep, from which a copious supply of water is drawn up by oxen working a *sakkia*. The monks of Dehr Suriani were more sociable and entertaining than the others. They returned my visit and appeared to be delighted with their reception in my tent."[66]

---

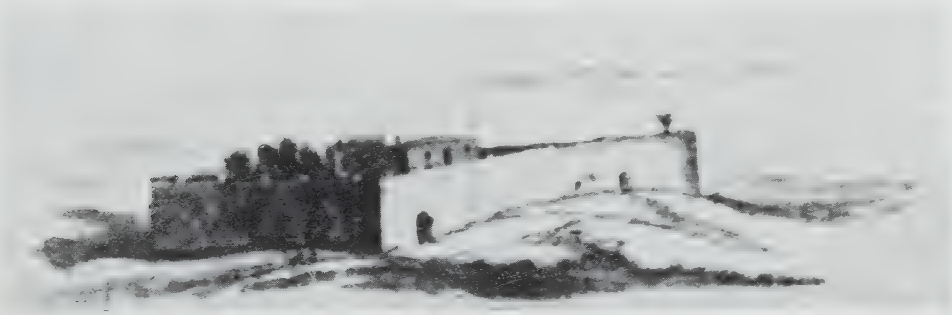
(63) Butler, *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt*, II, 309.

(64) Abû Iskhîrûn.

(65) *Ibid.*, 313.

(66) White, *From Sphinx to Oracle*, 266.

When Ewald Falls had departed from the Monastery of the Syrians in the summer of 1905, he went to the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî which boasted of possessing the best water of any of the Nitrian monasteries. "The pump which brings forth the precious liquid is in the third of the courtyards, and furnishes enough water for a tropical garden with many culinary vegetables, of which the monks are very proud. Notwithstanding this favourable condition, in comparison with the Macarius Monastery it seemed to me to be most behindhand." [67]



Butler, 1883

Dair Anbâ Bishoî from the north west.

The buildings of Anbâ Bishoî underwent so much restoration at the beginning of the last century, that it is less easy than in the others to trace out the old kernel. There is scarcely anything left of the old library. It was located in the qasr, and it must have been rich in illuminated books.[68] It was in this monastery where Falls noticed the "warning" that is added to a great number of books. The following text appeared at the end of a Synaxarium: "This book is an eternal inheritance for everlasting preservation in the Church of the great and perfect St. Anbâ Bishoî in his monastery, which is situated in the Desert of Shihat, in al-Asket in Wâdî Habîb, the balance of the heart. No one has the right to remove the same from the inheritance of the said monastery out of any frivolous ground, and anyone who acts contrary to this and does remove it, shares the lot and fate of Diocletian the unbeliever, Herod the apostate, Simeon the magician, and Judas the traitor; on the obedient, to the contrary, will there fall for ever and aye the blessing and reward of God; Amen! Amen! Amen!"[69] Furthermore, Falls records the tradition of the "waterless river" which was told him by the monks of Dair Anbâ Bishoî. "Hermits had settled

---

(67) Falls, *Three Years in the Libyan Desert*, 92.

(68) *Ibid.*, 93.

(69) *Ibid.*

near the hill of the "eagle's stone" on the bank of the stream, they were constantly attacked by river pirates, until, through the hermits' prayers the water sunk and then vanished forever." [70]

In 1909-10, and again in 1910-11, the Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expedition with W.J. Palmer-Jones, W. Hauser and H. Burton spent many weeks in the monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn making plans and sections of the chief buildings, supplemented by drawings, sketches and photographs.[71]

In 1910, Walter Tyndale proposed to visit the Coptic monasteries in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. It was in Cairo, in the Villa Victoria, where it was his good fortune to make the acquaintance of Mr. Palmer-Jones, "an enthusiastic architect who had measured up some of the early Coptic monasteries, and had also reconstructed on paper dynastic buildings of which little but the plan is at present traceable." [72] Travelling by train along the edge of the Libyan desert, Tyndale eventually arrived at a station called al-Khatâtba, where he was met by the agent of the Salt and Soda Company. From al-Khatâtba, twice a week, a steam-tram went to the rest-house in the valley. After having spent the night in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn rest-house, Palmer-Jones and Tyndale went early in the morning to visit the Dair Anbâ Bishoî, which to them looked more and more like a medieval fortress than a retreat for monks. The gateway was large and imposing ; but the door itself was small and sufficiently recessed to be defended through the loopholes in the projecting jambs.[73] "We were received by the prior in a bare and once whitewashed room, with a wooden bench round the walls. After the usual salutations, he ordered coffee, and even produced cigarettes ; but argue as long as we liked, he would not give us permission to sketch in the convent. The permission my friend had got, from the patriarch in Cairo, mentioned the other convents, and not the one we were in ; we should be allowed to see the church, but no sketching was to be done." [74] Jones had worked in this monastery during the winter of 1909-1910 and therefore did not think it necessary to get an authorisation merely to make a few sketches. To Tyndale, who had come as an artist, the most aggravating part was that the little church was picturesque in the extreme. Dissatisfied with

---

(70) *Ibid.*, 97.

(71) Jones, "Monasteries of the Wadi Natrun", *Metr. Mus. Bull.*, 6 and 7.

(72) Tyndale, *An Artist in Egypt*, 90.

(73) *Ibid.*, 96.

(74) *Ibid.*, 97.

the hegoumenos and himself, Tyndale and Palmer-Jones left the monastery in order to visit the Monastery of the Syrians.

When in 1912, Johann Georg, Duke of Saxony, visited the Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn for the first time, he stopped for only a little while at the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî. He was on his way from the Dair as-Surîân to the Dair Abû Maqâr, and his impressions of the monastery are limited indeed. As in the case of the other two monasteries, the monks at Dair Anbâ Bishoî received the Christian Duke with all ecclesiastical protocol. He mentions the major church of the monastery which was rather new, and criticizes the fact that the haikal doors had been recently painted in a horrible and ugly manner.[75] He went up to the keep, but was little moved by the Chapel of St. Michael on the top floor. The whole description shows that he spent only a very short time in the monastery.

In 1920, Hugh Evelyn White spent six weeks alone in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn taking the necessary notes to complete the work of the Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expedition which was begun in 1909 by W. J. Palmer-Jones. In November and December 1920, H. Burton, W. Hauser and Evelyn White went again to the monasteries for the purpose of supplementing the collection of photographs and architectural drawings. The monumental work consisting of three volumes by Evelyn White speaks for the high degree of efficiency with which he worked.

Three years later, in 1923, Dr. William Hatch of the Episcopal Theological Seminary in Cambridge, Mass., U.S.A., visited the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî and was conducted by the hegoumenos to an upper room, where there were fragments of paper manuscripts lying on the floor in great profusion. "I rummaged at will among the debris and picked up several leaves containing parts of Matthew, Luke, Acts, and James, as well as some liturgical fragments. All these were willingly given to me for the asking."[76] At the time of his visit the monastery was occupied by 22 monks.

When M. A. Kammerer left the Monastery of St. Macarius in the beginning of 1925, it took him two hours by camel to reach the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî. As at Dair Abû Maqâr he felt justified in comparing the church of the monastery with certain mosques. "Its principal church, al-'Adhrâ, the Church of the Virgin, is a perfect illustration of the resemblance that one finds between a Coptic Church

---

(75) Johann Georg, *Streifzüge durch die Kirchen und Klöster Aegyptens*, 36-37.

(76) Hatch, "A Visit to the Coptic Convents in Nitria", 99.

and a mosque, therefore there is no doubt that the principal church was built after the century of the Arab conquest."[77]

Twice, in 1930 and 1931, Prince 'Umar Tûssûn, Professor Breccia and Dr. Puy-Haubert visited the Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. The photographs of their expedition are published in Tûssûn's *Etude sur le Wadi Natroun.* The statistical information provided by the Prince gives the various sizes of the four monasteries. Their surface extends over the following areas:[78]

The Monastery of Abû Maqâr	1 Feddan	21 Karat	6 Sahm
The Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî ..	2 Feddan	16 Karat	14 Sahm
The Monastery of the Syrians	1 Feddan	16 Karat	
The Monastery of al-Barâmûs	2 Feddan	13 Karat	

From this table it is evident that the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî is the largest one in terms of surface area.

On the pillars of an ancient church on the first floor of the qasr of Dair Anbâ Bishoî are numerous graffiti. Apart from an inscription "L. A. Elsworth August 25th 1909" we discover an interesting note which commemorates the visit of a Patriarch. On Easter Sunday 1934, the Patriarch of Antioch, Anbâ Ighnâtîûs, visited the monastery and from there went to the Dair as-Surîân. We are told that, at that time, it rained very heavily in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn.

In preparation for her volume *Das Christlich-Koptische Aegypten einst und heute,* Dr. Maria Cramer visited Dair Anbâ Bishoî and Dair as-Surîân on March 18th, 1956. It was here where Dr. Cramer was shown the beautiful *scriptura illuminata* of the master calligrapher Anbâ Makârîûs III, the 114th Patriarch (1942-45), who came from the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî.

The Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, especially the Monastery of the Syrians and the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî, have repeatedly attracted the interest of foreign diplomats. Thus we find that Christian D. Holten-Eggert, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Denmark, visited the Monasteries of Wâdî 'n-Natrûn over 12 times between 1956 and 1958. Accompanied by the Danish Coptologist Soren Giverson, he paid a visit in 1957 to the monks of all the four monasteries. In the Monastery of the Syrians he took a series of exceptionally good colour slides of the wall-paintings of the Church of al-'Adhrâ. Dr. Walther Becker the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, visited the Monas-

---

(77) Kammerer, "Les Monastères", 136.

(78) Toussoun, *Etude sur le Wadi Natroun,* 49.

teries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn in the Spring 1959. Unfortunately, he was not able to call on the monks of Dair as-Surîân, for, at the time of his visit, it was Lent, when the monks do not receive visitors. Thus, the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî was the only monastery visited by the German Ambassador. During his term of office from 1953-1956, Ato Menbere Yayehirad, the Ethiopian Ambassador, accompanied by the Ethiopian Bishop of Harrar, Abûnâ Tawfîlus, visited among other monasteries the Dair al-Barâmûs where a few Ethiopian monks have lived and still live to this day. Raymond Hare, Ambassador of the United States of America, paid a visit to the monasteries in 1957. Other dignitaries and groups, among them the German Evangelical Church, Cairo, the Maadi Community Church, Cairo, and various Catholic Associations have frequently visited the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn.

The Wâdî 'n-Natrûn has attracted biologists, geologists and game-hunters for many centuries. Scientists, like Granger, went to the Desert of Scetis in search of biological specimens. In the 19th and 20th century, these expeditions became more numerous, and every aspect of life in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn was studied.[79] There is no doubt, that many scientists have visited the monasteries and enjoyed the hospitality of the monks. Sportsmen went from Cairo and Alexandria

---

(79) For a study of the geology of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, *cf.* Blankenhorn, *Geologie Aegyptens. Führer durch die geologische Vergangenheit Aegyptens von der Steinkohlperiode bis zur Jetztzeit.* The salt distribution in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn was investigated by Stocker, *Der Wasserhaushalt ägyptischer Wüsten — und Salzpflanzen,* 122-126. Rothshild and Henley, visiting the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn in 1903, observed a few gazelles. Hares were fairly common, and judging by their tracks, a species of jackal occurred, known by the natives as "dib". Wild boars, which even five or six years ago were fairly numerous, are now entirely extinct. De Winton, "List of Mammals etc.", 281, Hoogstraal of NAMRU 3 (1959), lists the following mammals in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn: Lesser rat-tailed bat, Tomb-bat, Horseshoe bat, Long-eared bat, Libyan long-eared hedgehog,[e] Charming gerbil,[e] Henley's Pygmy gerbil,[e] Anderson's Egyptian lesser gerbil,[e] Pallid gerbil,[e] Lesser Egyptian gerboa,[e] Cairo spring mouse, Rothshild's hare,[e] Egyptian fat-tail sand rat,[e] Egyptian fox, Sand fox, Fennec, House rat, Egyptian bandicoat rat,[e] Slender-horned gazelle.[e] (e) mammals which are eatable. See also Hoogstraal, *New Mammal Records from the Western Desert of Egypt,* 10-11. Meinertzhagen, *Nicoll's Birds of Egypt,* I, II, lists the following birds in Wâdî 'n-Natrûn: Brown-necked raven, Short-toed lark, Bar-tailed desert lark, Crested lark, Desert horned lark, Bi-fasciated lark, Blueheaded wagtail, Clamorous red warbler, Rufous warbler, Graceful warbler, Fan-tailed warbler, Little owl, Little bittern, Marbled teal, Little grebe, Stone-curlew, Cream-coloured courser, Little ringed plover, Kentish plover, Kittlitz' plover, Spurwinged plover, Black-winged stilt, Avocet, Water rail, Moorhen.

to the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn in search for game. Meinertzhagen informs us, that the last wild pig was shot in the Desert of Scetis in 1892.[80]

7. The Monastery in the Middle of the 20th Century

The visitor to the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî will find there five churches or chapels. The Church of Anbâ Bishoî which is the main church, the Church of Abû Iskhîrûn, the Church of al-'Adhrâ, the Church of Mârî Girgis and the Church of St. Michael on the roof of the qasr.

The Church of Anbâ Bishoî has three haikals and it is more than likely that it belongs to the most ancient part of the monastery, and dates from the ninth century. Set in the floor, at the western end of the church is the lakan, « λεκάνη », a marble basin which is used in the Maundy Thursday Rite for the footwashing.[81] In the south-west corner of the nave there stands the new dignified feretory of Anbâ Banîâmîn which is adorned with icons of the three Macarii, St. Thomas and the Crucifixion. The church, which has undergone several restorations, was newly redecorated in 1957. In the north-east corner of the choir there stands the feretory which contains the bodily remains of Anbâ Bishoî and his companion Paul of Tammuwah. Furthermore, the monks claim the body of St. Ephraem the Syrian. This church is used by the monks during the summer months for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

The Church of Abû Iskhîrûn is reached from the south side of the choir of the main church.[82] To the north of the haikal is the baptistry which was used the last time on the Feast of Anbâ Bishoî (July 15) 1955, and on the Feast of Anbâ Shanûdah (July 14) 1956.

To the north-east of the main Church is the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Butler tells us that, in his day, the relics of Anbâ Bishoî

---

(80) Meinertzhagen, *op. cit.*, I, 26. Yet, I understand that a wild pig was shot in 1926 in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. The specimen is exhibited in the Zoological Museum in Gîzah.

(81) *John:* 13: 4. f. In the ancient churches, at the western end of the nave, there is usually the Mandatum Tank, a shallow rectangular basin, about 60 cm. long and 30 cm. wide, sunk in the floor, and now covered by boards. This tank was formerly used for the Service of the Foot-washing on Maundy Thursday and on the Feast of SS. Peter and Paul. *Cf.* Burmester, *A Guide to the Ancient Coptic Churches of Cairo*, 11.

(82) Abû Iskhîrûn of Kalen was one of the soldiers of Arianus, the governor of Antinoë, who suffered severely under the persecutions of Emperor Diocletian. Eventually after having withstood the most horrible and cruel torture, Anbâ Abû Iskhîrûn was executed by the sword. *Ethiopian Synaxarium*, Same 7, Budge, IV, 975.

were kept there in a reliquary.[83] This chapel is used by the monks during the winter months for the Divine Liturgy which is celebrated here on Sundays and on feast days. The Church of Mârî Girgis, which at one time was used as a storage place for palm fiber, is not used now for services.

The ancient refectory of the monastery is connected with the western end of the church. While Evelyn White was told by the monks that they used the refectory for the single daily meal during Lent, I understood from the monks that now it is not used at all. South-east of the church is the kitchen and the bakehouse, where "almost the only cookery practised is the preparation of lentil soup in a single cauldron from which each monk receives his portion ; occasionally at festivals, such as Christmas and Easter, meat and even fowls are cooked by boiling in a large cauldron."[84]

The qasr of the monastery is entered at the first story level by means of a drawbridge which rests on the roof of the gatehouse. On the second story of the qasr is the Church of St. Michael. The icons on the iconostasis which date from the 18th century have been restored. They show the twelve apostles vested in pontifical vestments.[85] In no other monastery do we find the Church of St. Michael so isolated as in the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî. It is probable, therefore, that at one time the qasr had an additional floor, like those of the other monasteries. The date of the qasr is to be assigned to the 12th century.

On the first floor of the qasr, in the north-east corner of the main room, are still heaps of Coptic and Arabic fragments. Greville Chester, who had visited the monastery in 1873, already noticed this room, "strewn with leaves of Coptic and Arabic *MSS.* upon Charta Bombycina, amongst which appeared a few atoms of vellum." Chester points out, however, that all the ancient *MSS.* have been sold.[86] Butler, visiting the monastery a decade later, confirms Chester's observation.[87] At the time of Evelyn White's visit, great heaps of torn *MSS.* lay in the north-east corner of the first floor, and he adds, that "this heap may still contain many fragments of importance." The monks declined, however, to let him do more than glance at a few leaves.[88] William Hatch (1923),

---

(83) Butler, *op. cit.*, I, 313.

(84) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, III, 165.

(85) Butler, *op. cit.*, I, 315.

(86) Chester, "Notes on the Coptic Dayrs of the Wady Natrûn and on Dayr Antonios in the Eastern Desert," *The Archaeological Journal*, XXX, June 1873, 105-116.

(87) *Cf.*p. 230.

(88) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, III, 140.

on the other hand, was more fortunate, in so far as he was permitted to take away several manuscripts.[89] These fragments, which belonged to liturgical books, are edited by Hatch.[90] L.Th. Lefort, who made an excursion to the monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn in February 1939, brought back from the monastery a handful of crumpled paper among which were some fragments of liturgical codeces in the Bohairic dialect.[91] Many visitors have been permitted to take as a souvenir some fragments of 11th to 15th century Coptic manuscripts.

At one time, the library was stored in the qasr. This is no longer the case. A small room in the monastery-yard contains the poor remains of the library, and the books are stored in two cabinets with six shelves each. There are approximately 500 volumes, though not one of them is of any great value.

The most recent installations in the monastery are a power generator to supply the monastery with electricity, and a new water-pump, south of the qasr. A second belfry was erected in 1955.

The leadership of the monastery is in the hands of Anbâ Basîlîûs. At present twelve monks inhabit the monastery of whom 50 per cent are under 40 years of age. In addition to those living at Dair Anbâ Bishoî, four monks reside in Kafr Dâûd, near Khatâtba, where the monastery has its Dependency.[92]

It is to be hoped that some general improvements in the monastery will be achieved in the near future. For like the Monastery of the Syrians, Dair Anbâ Bishoî receives an ever increasing number of visitors who come from many nations. Thus, between 1950 and 1957, the monastery was visited by 92 Americans, 70 British, 40 French, 222 Germans, and many others. The efforts of the monks of the neighbouring monastery should serve as an inspiration.

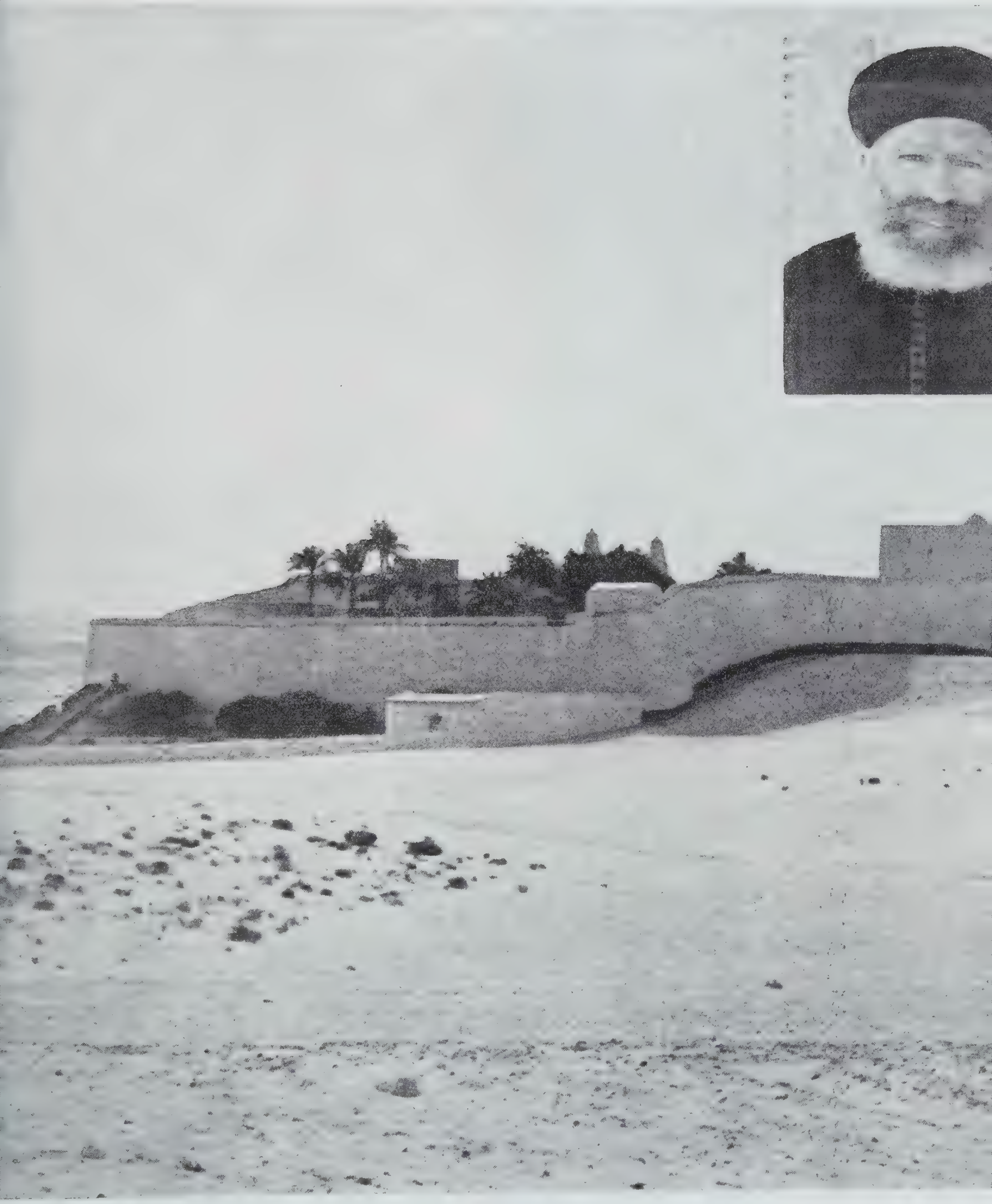
---

(89) *Cf.* p. 233.

(90) Hatch, "Three Liturgical Fragments from the Wadi Natrun." *Annual, American School of Oriental Research,* VII, 1925-26, 925-26, 94-99.

(91) Lefort, *Le Muséon*, LIII (1940), 65-66.

(92) Since 1950, three monks of the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî have gone to the Union of South-Africa, Anbâ Murqus, Abûnâ Ishaq al-Bishoî and Abûnâ Shanûdah al-Bishoî. At present (1959) only Abûnâ Ishaq al-Bishoî serves the Copts in Johannesburg. Anbâ Murqus was killed in an accident at Dair Anbâ Bishoî in 1953.

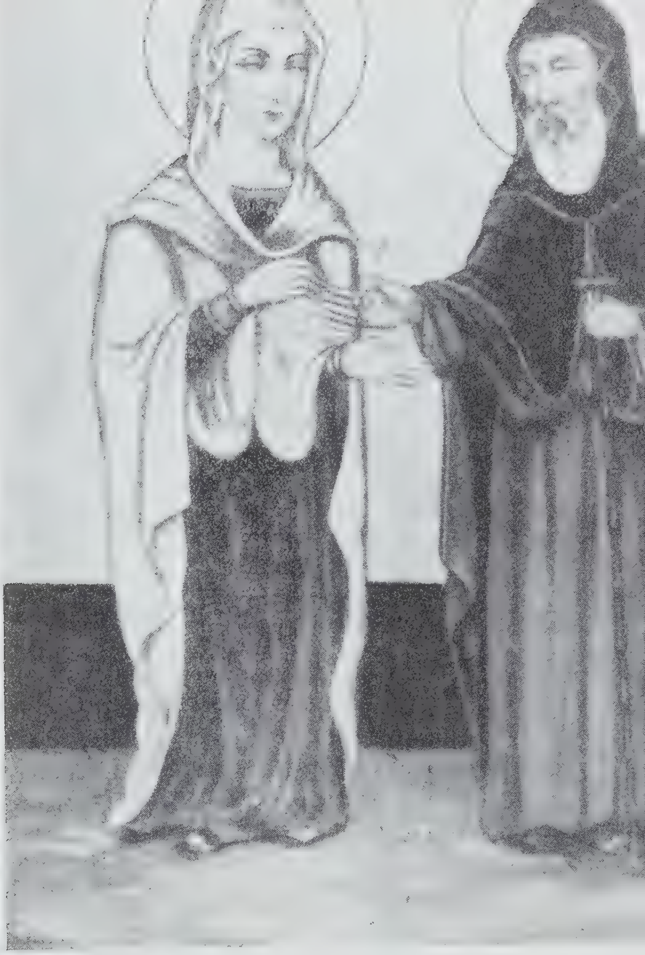


DAIR AS-SURIAN
Inset, Anbâ Tawfīlus, Bishop of the Monastery.

The Qasr or Keep with stairs leading up to the drawbridge.

Guesthouse, Bell-towers, Church of Al-'Adhra, and Church of the Forty Martyrs.

The Blessed Virgin Mary and St. John Kame.



Dair as-Surîân

1. St. John Kame

FOR many centuries the name of St. John Kame has been closely associated with the Monastery of the Syrians. There are even some people who claim, mistakenly, that he was its founder.

It is more than likely that after the destruction of the Monastery of St. John Kame between 1330 and 1442 or even later, the monks of that monastery migrated to the Syrian Monastery, transferring at the same time a commemoration tablet [1] and the relics of their Patron

---

(1) This marble stele with a Coptic text commemorating St. John Kame is affixed to the west wall of the choir of the Church of al-'Adhrâ in the Monastery of the Syrians.

Saint.[2] This may be the explanation of the presence of the two national groups in the Syrian Monastery at the beginning of the 15th century.[3]

St. John Kame[4] was a native of Jebromounonson in the district of Sais. At an early age he was forced into marriage, but he persuaded his bride to permit him to live the life of a monk. Inspired and moved by a religious vision, he entered the Desert of Scetis where he became a disciple of Anbâ Teroti who inhabited a cell in the vicinity of the Monastery of Abû Maqâr.

After some time an Angel directed him to go to the cell of St. John the Short, and here he shut himself up in a cave. "Now it befell, in the holy night of the Lord's Day, the while he stood performing his Synaxis, that the Holy Theotokos Mary came in unto him in great and unspeakable glory and a multitude of angels accompanied her. He fell upon his face from fear, but the Theotokos raised him and said unto him: 'Peace be unto thee, John, beloved of my Son Jesus, and of his Good Father and of the Holy Spirit. Be of good courage and steadfast and become a mighty man, having great endurance, fighting against the evil hostile spirits, that contend with thee. And lo, I am with thee until thou shall overcome them all and their evil, and fulfill the will of my Son.... and there shall be unto thee multitudes of children and they shall build a church in thy community and shall call it by my name.... the angels shall visit thy monastery and shall watch over thy children....' And she gave unto him three gold *solidi* having upon them the sign of the Cross and said unto him: 'Take these and put them in the purse of the ministry and the blessing of my Son shall be in it forever.' When she had said this unto him, she wished him peace and filled him with strength and she was hidden from him in great glory."[5]

---

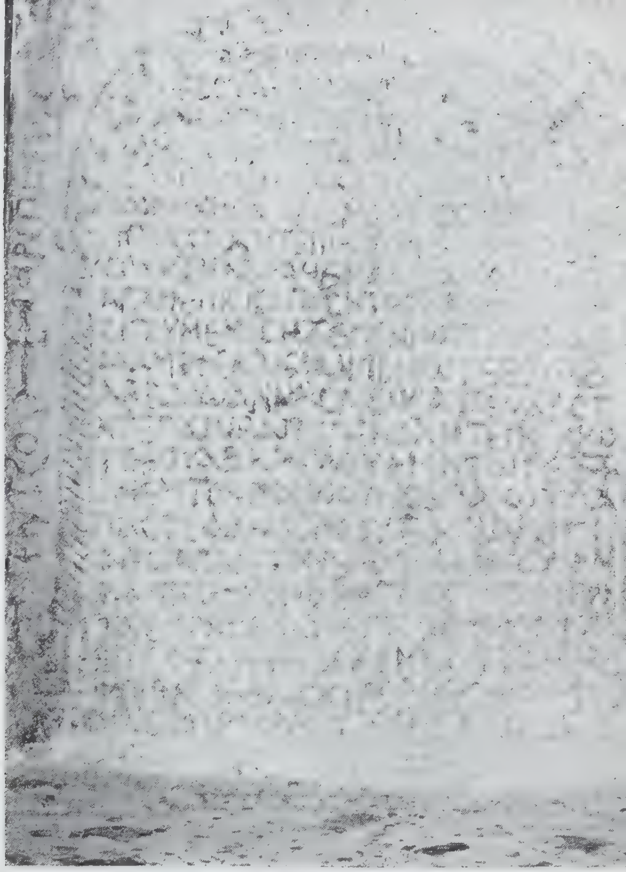
(2) When Anbâ Banîâmîn II visited the monasteries of the Desert of Scetis in 1330, the tour of inspection included a visit to the Monastery of St. John Kame. *Cf.* Evelyn White, *The Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn*, II, 396. Maqrîzî informs us that the Monastery of St. John Kame and the Monastery of St. Elias which belonged to the Abyssinians were destroyed on account of a worm that caused them to collapse. Wüstenfeld, *Maqrizi's Geschichte der Copten*, 111. Yet we hear from Armanius writing in his Mémoire (which is a reproduction of an unpublished manuscript of the Coptic historian Abu 'l-Makarim) that at the time of the visit of Anbâ Agathûn, the Patriarch of Antioch in the year 1482, the Monastery of St. John Kame was still there. Toussoun, *Etude sur le Wadi Natroun*, 44-46.

(3) *Cf* p. 250.

(4) The account of the *Vita* in the *Synaxarium* under the 25th Kihak differs slightly from the Cod. Copt. LX as edited by Davis, *Patr. Orient.*, XIV, 317-370.

(5) The Life of Abba John Kame, *Patr. Orient.*, XIV, 344-6.

Memorial Tablet of St. John Kame in the choir of the Church of al-'Adhra.



Church of al-'Adhra.

Before long the virtues of St. John Kame attracted some 300 disciples who gathered around him and built "a great ocean of dwellings and high towers and walls firmly established."[6] For the community of this monastery, St. John Kame drew up canons and regulations.

Before the end of his life, he left the Desert of Scetis following the voice of an Angel to go south to Upper Egypt.[7] The influence of St. John Kame is evident from his disciples, among whom were: "our father Shenouti,.... and my father Papa Mark, his successor after him, and my father Coluthus, and my father the deacon George, and my father Antony, and my father George, of whom is borne witness that they were worthy of the grace of the Holy Spirit."[8]

As to the date of the Saint, we are informed by the memorial tablet that he died on the 24th Kihak at the first hour of the night before the 25th, in the days of Abba Kosmas, the Archbishop of Rakoti[9] when our father Abraham was hegoumenos at the Church of our Holy father Abba Ionnes.... in the year 575 A.M. (859 A.D.).[10]

2. The Gaianite Heresy

It is now generally accepted that the Monastery of the Syrians was founded in the sixth century as a consequence of the so-called Gaianite heresy, and that it was the duplicate, or Theotokos monastery of Dair Anbâ Bishoî. In order to understand the origin of this monastery, it is, however, necessary to outline briefly the theological issue that led to its establishment. We have mentioned, elsewhere, that theological interpretations caused divisions within the church that also affected the monasteries of the Desert of Scetis.[11]

The controversy was carried on during the patriarchate of Anbâ Tîmûthâûs III (517-535 A.D.). At the time, the Emperor Justinian used all available methods to impose the Chalcedonian decrees upon the Monophysites. In 518 A.D., Anbâ Sâwîrûs, Patriarch of Antioch, and Anbâ Yûlîânûs (Julian), Bishop of Halicarnassus, were driven from their sees and took refuge in Egypt.[12] Here, these two men developed divergent views on the Nature of the Body of Christ, whether it was corruptible or incorruptible.[13] Julian, and subsequently Gaianus, held the view that Christ's Body was incorruptible. The followers of this

---

(6) *Ibid.*, 352.

(7) The departure may be identified with the flight from Scetis on account of the fifth raid of the Berbers in 817 A.D.

(8) The Life of Abba John Kame, *Patr. Orient.*, XIV, 354.

(9) Anbâ Qûzmân II (851-858 A.D.) was the 54th Patriarch of Alexandria.

(10) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, III, 194.

(11) *Cf.* pp. 127, 166.

(12) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 228.

(13) Neale, *The History of the Holy Eastern Church*, II, 30.

view became known as the Aphthartodocetae, or less properly, the Phantasiastae. Being a strict follower of Eutyches,[14] Julian argued that to deny the doctrine of the incorruptibility of the Body of Christ was to admit the position which the Greek and Latin Churches had taken up at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. Severus, on the other hand, argued that the corruptibility of the Body of Christ was an essential doctrine of the Faith, for he felt that otherwise, the truth of Christ's Passion would be denied. Severus' followers became known as the corrupticolae or phthartolatrae, that is the worshippers of the corruptible.

These theological discussions had an important effect upon the attitudes of the monks of the Desert of Scetis. Julian, who held to the incorruptibility of the Body of Christ, issued a statement, the *Tomarion,* "with an evil purpose.... in which he expressed his approval of the faith of Eutyches, the unbeliever.... and he sent this book about Egypt and to the monks of the desert. And they received it, and fell into the snare except seven persons, whose hearts were enlightened, and so they would not accept it, for they heard a voice saying: 'This is the impure *Tomarion.*' Then those who had fallen into the error of Julian rose up against them, and killed two of them. So the rest were scattered, and began to celebrate the liturgy in their cells in the Monastery of St. Macarius and in other monasteries. And this was the cause of their separation."[15]

That churches and "towers" (monasteries) were built at this time is attested by the *History of the Patriarchs,* which states that a man named Dorotheus, who took care of the affairs of the aged monks, and who had rejected the Julian heresy, approached Aristomachus, the governor of Egypt, begging him to authorise the building of churches and towers.[16] The governor gave orders to fulfill the request of Dorotheus, and the orthodox monks were able to return to the desert, yet they lived in their own monasteries.

The locality of the Monastery of the Syrians shows evidence that it originated as a duplicate monastery of that of Anbâ Bishoî. The name Theotokos, or Mother of God, monastery was derived from the importance with which the Orthodox monks regarded the doctrine of

---

(14) Eutyches (*ca.* 378-454) was archimandrite of a large monastery in Constantinople. He denied that the manhood of Christ was consubstantial with ours, and maintained, that there were two natures before, but only one after the Union in the Incarnate Christ.

(15) Hist. Patr., *Patr. Orient.,* I, 454. For the history of the Gaianite controversy see *op. cit.,* 451-469.

(16) *Ibid.,* 458.

the Incarnation.[17] The teachings of the Gaianites or aphthartodocetae were considered by their opponents as a kind of Docetist heresy, which denying the doctrine of the Incarnation, consequently lowered the status of the Blessed Virgin Mary. To emphasize their Orthodoxy, they retained the name of the Patron Saint and added to it the title of the Theotokos.

3. The Beginnings of the Monastery of the Syrians

The first identification of this monastery as a Syrian settlement is found in Mawhub's list of the monasteries of Scetis in 1088 A.D.[18] Speaking of 700 monks living in the Western desert, he allocated sixty to the Monastery of the Syrians.[19] The question as to the beginning of the Syrian colony, however, has to be answered from dates and names provided by manuscripts of the extensive library of the monastery.

The first Syrian monks to be associated with the monastery arrived in the Desert of Scetis at the beginning of the ninth century. They were Matthew and Abraham of the City of Tekrit, and there is good reason to believe that they settled in the Western desert about the time of the fifth sack of the desert monasteries.[20] A note in a Syriac manuscript of the middle of the ninth century contains the first explicit reference to the Syrian monastery. "Let each who reads pray for Isaac and Daniel and Shalmun, chaste monks of Mâr Junah of the Syrians, that is in Maris, who gave this book, with nine others, to the Monastery of the Mother of God of the Syrians which is in the desert of Egypt. . . . They entered this monastery in the days of the holy, blessed Patriarch Mâr Cosmas of Alexandria (851-859 A.D.) and Mâr John of Antioch (846-873 A.D.) and in the presence of the honoured old man, the monk Bar 'Idai, head of the monastery." [21] Possibly the first hegoumenos of the Syrian Monastery was Bar 'Idai. He, in turn, appointed the two monks Abraham and Matthew and gave them responsibility for the new institution which they had apparently restored, for during the fifth sack

---

(17) The devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is very marked with 32 feasts in her honour and an officium known as the Theotokia. The Theotokia corresponds to the Parvum Officium B. V. Mariae of the Latin Church, but unlike that office, does not reproduce the canonical hours, though it varies for the different days of the week. Like the Parvum Officium it is appended to the office of the day and it is most generally used during the month of Kihak (Dec. 10 — Jan. 9), when it serves as devotion preparatory to the Feast of the Nativity. *Cf.* Kabès, "La Dévotion à la Sainte Vierge dans l'Eglise Copte."

(18) *Hist. Patr.*, II, II, 212.

(19) *Ibid.*

(20) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 310.

(21) Wright, *Cat. Syr. MSS.*, in Brit. Museum, No. DCCLXXXI, 766, quoted by Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 310.

of Scetis the monasteries were laid in ruins.[22] It is one of the paradoxes of history, that a great deal of our knowledge of the monasteries of the Desert of Scetis should come to us, not as is to be expected from Coptic, but from Syriac sources. For with the foundation of the Monastery of the Syrians, there was connected the establishment of a library. There is reason to believe that the Syrians at that time were well versed in art and literature.[23] This propensity was no doubt reflected in their monastic life, as it is evident from the art treasures and the earliest collections of manuscripts which were inaugurated by the two Tekrît monks, Matthew and Abraham.[24]

The first Syrian members of the monastery were described as natives of the city of Tekrit which happened to be the ancient metropolis of the Syrian Jacobites. It is only logical to suppose that the Tekrit-Syrians, who had a colony in Fustât, donated to the purchase of the otherwise abandoned monastery.[25] It is recorded that a Syrian named Marutha, the son of Habîb, bought the monastery for the use of his devout countrymen. Evelyn White suggested that this transaction took place at the beginning of the eighth century,[26] whereas, Butler feels that the Dair as-Surîân owes its foundation to the period when so much of Syrian life and learning was removed to Egypt under stress of the Persian wars, which would place the date of the purchase in the seventh century.[27] For that matter, it is known that prior to the establishment of a Syrian Monastery, Syrian monks resided in the Desert of Scetis. The *Synaxarium* mentions two martyrs, Eunapius and Andrew of Lydda, who in the fourth century lived in "un couvent de Syrie",[28] and we are told by internal sources that a Syrian community existed in Scetis in 576 A.D.[29] With the knowledge of the presence of Syrian monks in the Western Desert, the action of Marutha in purchasing a home for his compatriots becomes very comprehensible.

4. The Growth of the Monastery

In the tenth century, the Monastery of the Syrians gained in prominence and importance. Incised in the haikal screen of the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which even in ancient days was the principal sanctuary, is an important reference in the Syriac language. It speaks of a hegoumenos, Moses of Nisibis, who had the doors constructed during the patriarchate of Mâr Cosmas III of Alexandria

---

[22] Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 311.

[23] Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt*, 93 f.

[24] Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 439.

[25] *Ibid.*, 315.

[26] *Ibid.*, 318.

[27] Butler, *op. cit.*, 95.

[28] Synax., *Patr. Orient.*, I, 293.

[29] Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 319.

(920-932 A.D.) and Mâr Basil of Antioch (932-935 A.D.).[30] This Moses of the city of Nisibis was no doubt a remarkable man. Among other things he is credited with valuable additions to the monastic library. In 927 A.D. he went to Bagdad, as a representative of the Desert Monasteries, to obtain the exemption of taxes for the monasteries from the Abbasid Caliph al-Muktadir bi'llah (908-932 A.D.). Taking advantage of his travels, he secured many valuable volumes which greatly enriched the library collection.[31]

Following the patriarchate of Anbâ Mînâ II (956-974 A.D.), a Syrian merchant named Abrâm ibn Zar'ah ascended the patriarchal throne. *The History of the Patriarchs*[32] gives a detailed account of his office. He was a pious and charitable man who, among other things, abolished simony which the patriarchs used to practice.[33] It happened, "that when he was a layman, he went to the Monastery of Abba Macarius in the Wâdî Habîb to pray there." [34] Evelyn White feels that as a Syrian he was naturally interested in the Syrian Monastery.[35]

There seems to be some evidence that, during the reign of Anbâ Fîlûtâûs (Philotheus) (979-1004), the Syrian monastery was associated with the Coptic patriarch. A synodical letter, written in 987 A.D. by Fîlûtâûs to Athanasius VI of Antioch shows that the monastery was under the patronage and the protection of the Copts.[36]

By the 11th century, according to the census taken by Mawhûb, the Syrian monastery rated as the third largest community in the Wâdî Habîb. With its sixty monks, it was as large as Dair Anbâ Bishoî and Dair al-Barâmûs together.[37]

The ecumenical and international character of the Desert of Scetis becomes even more evident by the connections that the Armenian Church had with the monks of the Western Desert. In the latter part of the 11th century, the Armenian Catholicos St. Vahram, also known as Gregory II, who was the son of Gregory Magistros, wished to retreat into solitude and to consecrate himself to a life of prayer, so as to resemble St. John the Baptist. Having adopted the rule of St. Antony, he was inspired to live on the top of the mountains. He decided to abandon the patriarchate and have his office taken over by George, his chancellor... When the Armenian king heard of this, he attempted to stop the Catholicos from executing his plans,[38] but the king failed,

---

(30) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, III, 171, 185.

(31) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 443.

(32) *Hist. Patr.*, II, II. 135.

(33) *Ibid.*, 136.

(34) *Ibid.*, 146.

(35) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 340.

(36) *Ibid.*, 341.

(37) *Hist. Patr.*, II, II, 241.

(38) Dulaurier, *Chronique du Matthieu d'Edessa*, XCIX, 160.

and in 1074, St. Vahram went from Constantinople to Rome, and from there to Egypt in order to visit the desert, where the ancient fathers lived. There he accomplished the desire of his heart, and he established his patriarchal throne, and he made vigorous the institutions of the Holy Church. He was welcomed with high honours by the Egyptian king.[39] He was followed by a large group of Armenians who arrived and joined him, because at that time there were 30,000 Armenians in Egypt.[40] *The History of the Patriarchs* informs us that even prior to the visit of Gregory II, a saintly Armenian monk known as al-Manakis had entered the Desert of Scetis and had associated himself with the saintly monk Bessus.[41] From this we can see that the life in the Desert of Scetis had resumed its normal course, and that it was attractive enough to be appealing to overseas visitors.

Little is known about the history of the Syrian Monastery in the 13th and 14th centuries. A scribal note of the middle of the 13th century quoted by Evelyn White leads one to believe that "at this time (1254) the number of monks at the Syrian monastery must have been comparatively large." [42] Refugees fleeing probably before the Western advance of the Mongols, may have found refuge in the Wâdî Habîb, and thus the monasteries may have experienced a short time of prosperity.[43]

5. The Decline and Revival of the Monastery

For how long this large community continued to exist is doubtful indeed. A hundred years later the Desert of Scetis was visited by the *Black Death,* and, subsequently, by famine and pestilence. The monasteries had reached their lowest level in their long and venerable history. A note inscribed in a Syriac manuscript informs us that John, a visitor to the Monastery of the Syrians, found in it but a single monk. "I, John, a desert monk from the Convent of the house of Mar Simeon of Kartamin, read in this book of stories of the Saints.... I, John, entered this monastery in the year 1724 of the Greeks (1413). I only found one single monk in this Monastery, Rabban Moses of Husn Kifa: God pardon him." [44]

Neither schism nor persecution had subdued the desert monks, but it was otherwise with the *Black Death,* which can hardly have failed

---

(39) The Fatimid Caliph Mustansir bi'llah.

(40) Dulaurier, *op. cit.,* CVIII, 177.

(41) *Hist. Patr.,* II, III, 345.

(42) Wright, *Cat. Syr. MSS.* in Brit. Museum No. CXCVII, 94; CCXXVIII, 171.

(43) Evelyn White, *op. cit.,* II, 390.

(44) Wright, *Cat. Syr. MSS.* in Brit. Museum, No. MXXXII, 1199, quoted by Evelyn White, *op. cit.,* II, 403.

to reach the monasteries, and the resultant mortality must have been frightful.

Maqrîzî, reporting on the monasteries in the middle of the 15th century, merely states that "a monastery opposite the Monastery of Bû Bishaî belonged to the Jacobites ; since three hundred years, however, it has been in the possession of Syrian monks and at this time it is in their hands. The district in which these monasteries are situated is known by the name of 'Lake of the Monasteries'."[45] By this time, the monastery seems to have regained some of its importance, as the number of its monks indicates.

By the end of the 15th century, the 59th Antiochene patriarch, Ignatius XI (1484-1493), is reported to have visited the monastery in the Desert of Scetis, where the Syrian monks dwelt. Certain benefits and privileges were bestowed upon the monastery, and a return visit of the patriarch strengthened the bonds between the See of Antioch and the monks of the Wâdî Habîb. "It is clear, then, that Ignatius XI was deeply interested in the monastery, and it is natural to connect his visits with the revival which took place at this period."[46] The hegoumenos of the monastery at this time (1484) was Gummus Kîrîâqûs (Kyriakos).[47]

In the second half of the 15th century, several Syrian monks engaged in outstanding literary activities. Dâûd ibn Butrus, who was the author of thirty-eight homilies, Habîb of Takrit, who wrote twenty homilies dealing with the ascetic life, and Garir of Takrit, who wrote a historical treatise about the names of the Church Fathers, are only the best known authors of this intellectually creative and productive period.[48] The scholastic activity in the monastery leads one to conclude that the monastery had passed its most severe test and that it had gained new strength. That this was not merely a temporary restoration is evident from a scribal note in a manuscript[49] written in the Monastery of the Syrians in 1516. This document relates that at the time of the hegoumenship of Cyric (Severus) of Mount Lebanon, there were altogether 48 monks, of whom 25 were Egyptians. This note is important in so far as this is the earliest evidence of the return of

---

(45) Wüstenfeld, *Maqrizi's Geschichte der Copten*, 111.

(46) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 408.

(47) Monks of Dair as-Surîân, *Sirat al-Anbâ Yuhannis Kame, tarîkh Dair as-Surîân*, 54.

(48) Graf, *Gesch. d. christl. arab. Lit.*, IV, 11.

(49) Zotenberg, *Cat. MSS. Syr.* Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, No. 74, 44f. quoted by Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 408.

(50) *Ibid.*

Egyptians to the Monastery of the Syrians.[50] The 95th patriarch, Anbâ Ghabrîâl VII, (1526-1569) had been a monk of the Dair as-Surîân before he ascended the patriarchal throne. During his patriarchate, the monastery was so strong that it could dispatch 50 per cent of its monks to the two monasteries in the Thebaid. In 1484, the Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs and Dair Anbâ Bûlâ were destroyed by the Bedouins. With the help of twenty monks of the Dair as-Surîân, the Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs was rebuilt. Ten monks of the Syrian monastery were commissioned to assist in the reconstruction of Dair Anbâ Bûlâ. There is no better proof of the inner strength and vitality of the Syrian monastery than this gesture.[51]

In 1584, a monk called Qummus John was the hegoumenos of the monastery. Forty years later, in 1624, Qummus 'Abd al-Masîh al-Ambirî made extensive improvements to the churches and the guest-house of the monastery. Among other things, he renewed the icons, and added substantially to the library collection.[52] Later he was consecrated to the Abunate of Ethiopia, where he was known as Anbâ Akhristûdulûs (Christodoulos). The last days of his life, however, he spent in the Desert of Scetis, where he was buried in the Church of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste. Slowly, however, the Syrian influence decreased. During the hegoumenship of Qummus 'Abd al-Masîh, a Syrian monk, Thomas of Maridin, made the following statement: "I, the servant, entered the Monastery of the Virgin in the Desert of Scetis, and I saw therein writings without number arranged without order, and I began in love, and dusted them and counted them. They came to 403 books. Also I arranged them in the tower of the fortress..." [53]

6. The 17th and 18th Century Travellers

The first traveller of the 17th century was the French consul of Damietta, Fr. Coppin, who in 1638 gave a brief account of the Syrian Monastery. From his description it is obvious that he had visited the monastery at least once, probably in search of manuscripts. Beginning with the Dair Abû Maqâr and the Dair Anbâ Bishoî, he mentions the third monastery which is called that of the Syrians, which is dedicated to St. George (sic!) and located in the immediate vicinity of the Monastery of Ambabioche (Anbâ Bishoî). It was sparsely inhabited and evidently in great disorder. He noticed two churches in the monastery, one for the Syrians or Jacobites who came to visit the desert, while

---

(51) Monks of Dair as-Surîân, *op. cit.*, 53.

(52) *Ibid.*, 54.

(53) Wright, *Cat. Syr. MSS.* in Brit. Museum, No. CCCLXXIV, quoted by Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 453.

many relics were kept in both churches. Fr. Coppin continues his description by mentioning the story of the Tree of St. Ephraem which, according to the monks, was unique in Egypt.[54]

In 1657, Thévenot, visiting the monasteries of the Desert of Scetis, gives an insight as to the state of affairs in the Syrian Monastery. After his description of Dair Anbâ Bishoî, he speaks of the Monastery of the Syrians, "a quarter of a league distant from Ambabichoye, it is but small, but very pleasant, has good water, and is the best in order of all. There you see two fair Churches, one for the Syrians and another for the Copts, in which are many Relicks. In this last is the staff of St. Ephraem,[55] who being come to visit another Hermite, and having left his staff at the Door, whilst he was in discourse with the other whom he came to see, his staff took root and blossomed, and is now a lovely great Tree, and the only in Egypt of its kind."[56]

Wansleben repeats in many ways the statements of Thévenot. He, too, speaks of the two churches in the monastery. "Il y a deux Eglises dans le premier (Dair as-Surîân), une pour les Syriens, l'autre pour les Coptes."[57] He also mentions the "arbre miraculeusement cru du baton de St. Ephraem."[58]

On hearing the story of the miraculous tamarind tree of St. Ephraem repeated over and over again, one cannot help but be reminded of the famous Glastonbury thorn, a kind of Levantine hawthorn, which though sacrilegiously cut down by Oliver Cromwell's soldiers, regrew and flowers at Christmas as well as in Spring. As the story goes, this tree sprang from the staff of St. Joseph of Arimathea, who is said to have come to England with the Holy Grail and built the first church in the country at Glastonbury.

Six years after Wansleben's account, Robert Huntingdon, Chaplain to the Levant Company, visited the monasteries. He mentioned the Syrian Monastery, but remarked on nothing there save a Syrian Old Testament in the library, and the Tree of St. Ephraem, which he considers, "is clear proof that the monastery once belonged to the Syrians." It appears, therefore, that by the time of Huntingdon's visit in 1679, the Syrian occupation of the monastery had terminated.[59]

---

(54) Coppin, *Relation des Voyages faits dans la Turquie, la Thébaide, et la Barberie,* 345.

(55) *Cf.* p. 214.

(56) Thévenot, *The Travels of Monsieur de Thévenot into the Levant,* I. 244.

(57) Wansleben, *Nouvelle Relation en forme de Journal, d'un Voyage fait en Egypte en 1672 et 1673,* 228.

(58) *Ibid.*

(59) *Huntingtoni epistolae,* ed. Smith, quoted by Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 420.

In his letter from Dublin, concerning the Porphyry pillar in Egypt, Dr. Huntingdon referred to the Monastery of the Syrians. "In the chief monastery of the four now remaining (of the 366, as many as are days in the longest year) dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, the two stones which secure their entrance are of the like, if not the very same substance, which I more particularly observed upon the account of their ingenious contrivance." [60] These two mill-stones, interestingly enough, can still be observed by the visitor in front of the north gate of the monastery.

News of the monastery's extensive library collection had travelled across the seas to ecclesiastical and private European bibliophiles. In 1700, Pope Clement XI (1700-1721), who was a generous patron of art and literature, commissioned Gabriel Eva, the hegoumenos of the Monastery of St. Maura, Mount Lebanon, to see the Coptic Patriarch Anbâ Yûânnis XVI to ascertain his sentiments towards the Roman Church. [61] On his way, Gabriel Eva visited the important monasteries of Egypt, and on his return to Rome informed the Pope about the library treasures which he had seen. In 1707, Elias Assemani, the librarian of the Vatican library, was sent to Egypt, where he secured forty volumes from the Monastery of the Syrians.[62]

It is fairly certain, that, by the time of Assemani's visit, Syrians were no longer among the monks of this monastery, for it would have been natural for Assemani as a Syrian to mention it had he met some of his countrymen in Egypt.

A more extensive account of the Coptic monasteries at the beginning of the 16th century was provided by Father Claude Sicard. [63] He visited the monasteries in the Desert of Scetis in December 1712, and evidently was impressed greatly by the Monastery of the Syrians. For he writes that "it is the best of the four... it has a very pleasant garden with a number of trees of various species, tamarinds, dates, and a large tamarind tree which grew out of the staff planted by St. Ephraem." [64] The hegoumenos of the monastery received him with "grandes démonstrations d'amitiés", and after prayers in the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary he participated in the meal which consisted of lentil soup and bread which was eaten in the refectory. Fr. Sicard's description of the monastic life at Dair as-Surîân is quite complete; thus, for

---

(60) Ray, *A Collection of Curious Travels and Voyages*, II, 151.

(61) Neale, *op. cit.*, II, 473.

(62) Simaika, *Catalogue of the Coptic and Arabic Manuscripts in the Coptic Museum, etc.*, xxi.

(63) Sicard, *Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses...*, III, 182.

(64) *Ibid.*

example, he relates that the monks spend their days in psalmody and manual work, and only rarely leave the monastery because of fear of wandering Arabs. As in the case of his other contacts in the monasteries, Fr. Sicard debated with the monks on theology and doctrine, for this had been the primary purpose of his visit.

In 1715, the then librarian of the Vatican library, J.S., Assemani, a relative of Elias, visited the Monastery of the Syrians in company with Fr. Claude Sicard. They had first called at the Monastery of Abû Maqâr, where they were most successful in their mission to obtain ancient books. At the Monastery of the Syrians they also discovered some excellent Syriac manuscripts, though Fr. Sicard does not mention the volumes they secured.[65]

Fifteen years after J.S. Assemani's visit, Tourtechot de Granger went to the Dair as-Surîân. But again, — as he had experienced at the Monastery of St. Macarius — he was refused admittance to the library, nor could he purchase any of the manuscripts.[66] As a natural historian, Granger was interested in the geological structure of the Wâdî, and it is interesting to hear from him the account of St. Ephraem who by his prayers caused the waters to recede.[67]

In the history of the Syrian Monastery there is mention of the two hegoumenoi of the monastery, Qummus Manqârîûs (1773) and Qummus Kelâda an-Nasekh (1774). Until 1774, the hegoumenos of the Syrian Monastery used to reside in at-Terrâna near Manûfiah. From then on, however, the hegoumenoi lived in Atrîs, from where they organised the supplies for the monastery.[68]

On January 13, 1778, Sonnini coming from the Monastery of al-Barâmûs visited the "Monastery of Saide Sourian." He writes that its name indicates that it was formerly in the possession of the Syrians, who have been succeeded by the Copts.[69] The ancient Syrian church is still standing, and it is tolerably handsome and decorated with sculpture and paintings in fresco. Upon one of the pillars are cut the names of several European travellers, Baron[70] and Granger.[71] "The place of retreat, or little fort, was as well constructed as that of Saide el Baramous, and the monks appeared to be less filthy, and not so

---

(65) *Ibid.*, 279.

(66) Granger, *Relation du Voyage fait en Egypte, en l'année 1730*, 179.

(67) *Ibid.*, 174.

(68) Monks of Dair as-Surîân, *op.cit.*, 55.

(69) Sonnini, *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt*, 364.

(70) The name of the traveller called "Baron" does not appear in the *Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca.*

(71) Tourtechot de Granger visited the monastery in 1730.

grossly ferocious. Their superior was a man turned of thirty, absolutely without a beard, and not having a single hair on any part of his body. These monks also have a little garden, which is both more extensive and better cultivated than that belonging to the other convent." [72] In one of the courts, Sonnini noticed an immense tamarind tree, which the Copts consider to be the effect of some miraculous vegetation. Then follows the well known story of St. Ephraem.

When W.G. Browne visited the Monastery of the Syrians in 1792, it was quite impossible for him to obtain any manuscripts, either in the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî or in the Monastery of the Syrians. He writes : "During my stay near the lakes, I visited two of the Coptic convents, that called the Syrian, and that of St. George (sic !), where I could observe no traces of any European traveller... these convents contain each of them several religious, who retain all the simplicity of the primitive ages. I inquired for manuscripts and saw in one of the convents several books in the Coptic, Syriac and Arabic language. The superior told me that they had near 800 books, but positively refused to part with any of them, nor could I see any more." [73]

Only a few years after the visit of W.G. Browne, Count Andréossy, the French general serving with the armed forces of Napoléon, visited the Monastery of the Syrians, and it is beyond doubt that he studied the monastery very carefully. He referred to the books which were on parchment and cotton paper, and he writes that he actually removed some of them.[74] He, like all his predecessors and successors, was shown the miraculous tree of St. Ephraem of which he took measures. The height was six and a half metres, the circumference three metres. He identified the tree as a *Tamarindus Indica* of which the Syrian monks (sic !) believed that they were the sole possessors. As to the origin of the tree, Andréossy obviously confused the story of St. Ephraem with that of the Tree of Obedience.[75] At the time of his visit, eighteen monks inhabited the monastery.

7. The 19th and 20th Century Travellers

The first Englishman to bring to light any of the treasures of the Syrian Monastery was the Duke of Northumberland, who, in the year 1828, accompanied by Mr. Linant-Bey, undertook a journey across the Egyptian desert to the lonely valley of Nitria, for the express purpose of endeavouring to procure a copy of a Coptic and Arabic Dictionary,

---

(72) Sonnini, *op. cit.*, 365.

(73) Browne, *Travels in Africa, Egypt and Syria from 1792-1798*, 42-43.

(74) Andréossy, "Mémoire sur la vallée des lacs de Natroun," 291.

(75) *Ibid.*, 291.

which he had understood was to be found there.[76]

In his description of the Natron Lakes, Baron Taylor,[77] or by his real name the Fr. Laorty-Hadji,[78] who visited Egypt in 1828 and 1830, provides in many ways the same information as that of General Andréossy.[79] Impressed by the hospitality of the monks, he describes how they share their food, their bread and their dates with the Bedouins. His special attention, however, was directed to the miraculous tree of St. Ephraem.

In 1837, Lord Curzon visited the Syrian Monastery where he was hospitably received by the hegoumenos and fourteen or fifteen Coptic monks.[80] He purchased several Coptic manuscripts which were lying on the floor in one of the niches of the tower. One of these was a superb manuscript of the Gospels, two others were doing duty as coverings to a couple of large open pots or jars which had contained preserves, long since evaporated. On the floor, Curzon found a fine Coptic and Arabic dictionary. After his purchases, the blind hegoumenos declared that there were no other books in the monastery. Curzon, however, being very persistent, because he had been told by a French gentleman in Cairo of ancient manuscripts in the monks' oil cellar, used all means available to him to obtain them. He produced a bottle of rosoglio and knowing of its potency he purposely darkened the conscience of the good hegoumenos. "Next to the golden key, which masters so many locks, there is no better opener of the heart than a sufficiency of strong drink... I have always found it to be invincible; and now we sat sipping our cups of the sweet pink rosoglio... and the face of the blind abbot waxed bland and confiding... I had, by the by, a great advantage over the good abbot, as I could see the workings of his features and he could not see mine, or note my eagerness about the oil-cellar..."[81] At last, Lord Curzon persuaded the hegoumenos to permit him to descend the narrow staircase to the oil-cellar, where he discovered a narrow low door, and after pushing it open, he entered into a small vaulted room which was filled to the depth of two feet or more with the loose leaves of Syriac manuscripts. In addition, he discovered to the great surprise of the monks, a mysterious box which to the great disappointment of everyone concerned contained one book. After this, as many Coptic and Syriac manuscripts as

---

(76) Cureton, *The Festal Letters of Athanasius*, xii; Murray, *Handbook for Travellers*, II, 365.

(77) Taylor, *La Syrie, l'Egypte, la Palestine et la Judée*, 107-110.

(78) Laorty-Hadji, *L'Egypte*, 150 f.

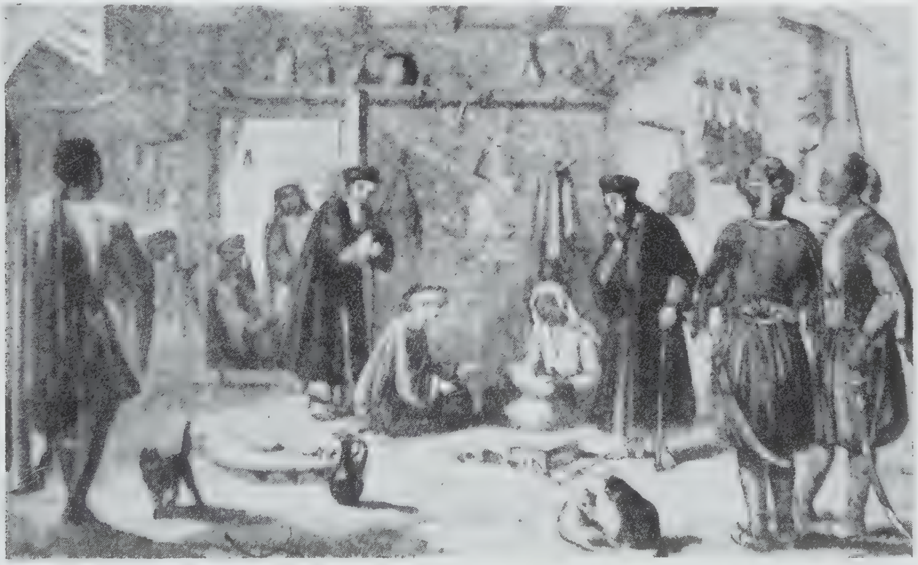
(79) *Cf.* Andréossy, *loc. cit.*

(80) Curzon, *Visits to the Monasteries in the Levant*, 84-85.

(81) *Ibid.*, 87.

possible were stowed away in one side of a great pair of saddle bags, but Curzon had to leave some of them behind.

Much more significant was Lord Curzon's discovery of an Ethiopian community which, in the south-east corner of the monastery, occupied a room that was twenty-six feet long and twenty feet wide and twelve feet high, the roof of which was formed of the trunks of palm trees, across which reeds were laid. The interior of the walls was plastered white with lime and the windows were unglazed. Curzon noticed among other things, a rather extensive library belonging to the Ethiopians. The books were enclosed in a case, fastened with leather thongs, and to this case was attached a strap for the convenience of carrying the volume over the shoulders. All the Ethiopian monks whom Curzon met, could read fluently out of their own books which was more than the Copts could do. He was informed by a monk that their monastery in which they had lived in the Desert of Scetis had fallen into decay, and that they now lived at Dair as-Surîân, and that their numbers were recruited occasionally by pilgrims on their way



Abyssinian monk clothed in leather.	The dining table.	The blind abbot leaning over the Author.	Abyssinian monk.	The books hanging from wooden pegs let into the wall.	The Author's Egyptian servants.

Interior of the Abyssinian Library, in the Monastery of the Syrians.

Curzon, 1837

from Abyssinia to Jerusalem, some of whom used to pass by every year.[82] We know that an Ethiopian community existed in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn towards the close of the 12th century. Maqrîzî mentions the Monastery of the Holy Elias which belonged to the Ethiopians, which, however, was completely destroyed, whereupon, the Ethiopians went to the Monastery of the Virgin of St. John the Short which was a fine monastery and situated near the Monastery of St. John the Short.[83]

The next bibliophile to visit the Syrian Monastery was the Reverend Henry Tattam, archdeacon of Bedford, who came, early in 1839, in search of Coptic manuscripts. When he arrived, "pipes and coffee" were brought to him, after which the priests conducted him to their churches, and showed him the books used by them. They then desired to know his object in visiting them : upon which he cautiously opened his commission, by saying that he wished to see their books. They replied, that they had no more than what he had seen in the church, whereupon he told them plainly that he knew they had. They laughed on being detected, and, after a short conference, said that he should see them. The bell soon rang for prayers, and he accompanied them to their Service, and then returned to his tent, where some of the monks visited him in the evening, and brought him a present of bread. The following day, immediately after breakfast, Dr. Tattam again went into the monastery in order to examine the *MSS.*, and endeavour to purchase some of them. The priests conducted him to the tower, and then into a dark vault, where he found a great quantity of very old and valuable Syriac *MSS.* He selected six quarto or small folio volumes, and took them to the Superior's room. He was next shown a room in the tower, where he found a number of Coptic and Arabic *MSS.*, principally Liturgies, with a beautiful copy of the Coptic Gospels. He then asked to see the rest : the priests looked surprised, to find that he knew of others, and at first seemed disposed to deny that they had any more, but at length produced the key of the apartment where their other books were kept, and admitted him. After looking them over, he went to the Superior's room, where all the priests were assembled, about fifteen or sixteen in number. One of them brought a Coptic and Arabic Selim or Lexicon, which Dr. Tattam wished to purchase, but they informed him that they could not part with it, as it was forbidden to be taken away by an interdiction at the end, but they consented to make him a copy of it. He paid for

---

(82) *Ibid.*, 94.

(83) Wüstenfeld, *op. cit.*, 111.

two of the Syriac *MSS.* he had placed in the Superior's room, for the priests could not be persuaded to part with more."[84]

In February 1839, Tattam revisited the monasteries and secured a large sack full of splendid Syriac manuscripts on vellum. Four years later, in 1842, the British Museum delegated the Reverend Tattam to Egypt in order to secure the remainder of the collection. "Tattam not unreasonably left the negotiations for the purchase to the sheikh of a village on the borders of the desert and to his own dragoman, but with unspeakable foolishness left the delivery and the removal of the books to the pair. The natural result followed. Tattam secured a large part (but only a part) of the collection for which he paid, the monks held back the remainder, and the sheikh and the dragoman, we may be sure, took their share of the purchase money."[85] Three hundred and fourteen manuscripts arrived at the British Museum in 1843.

In 1843, Sir Gardner Wilkinson went via at-Terrâna to the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, where he visited the Monastery of the Syrians. He noticed that "some of the monasteries at the Natron Lakes have a collection of books composed of Arabic, Coptic and Syriac manuscripts. Many of them are copies of older manuscripts which had been injured by time and accident... Mr. Tattam, on his visit to these monasteries a few years ago, brought away upwards of fifty volumes. Among them was a treatise of Eusebius, not previously known, and on his return in 1843, he obtained four times that number of manuscripts, all indeed that were not used by the monks." Sir Gardner stayed at the Monastery of Abû Maqâr and at that of the Syrians. Of the latter he says "Every civility is shown to the stranger during his stay which I experienced at Dair Surian.... the room allotted was well lighted, but I recommend to visitors to remove the mats before they take up their abode there, otherwise they are not likely to pass a comfortable night, under the assaults of some hundreds of bugs, and they will run a risk of carrying away many score in the baggage, which may continue to torment them and people the houses of their future hosts." At the time of Sir Gardner's visit, the Monastery of the Syrians was the most important monastery from the point of view of the number of monks, for it had thirty or forty monks living within its walls.[86]

When, in 1844, Tischendorf visited the Monastery of the Syrians, he was shown the tree of St. Ephraem. The purpose of his visit was

---

(84) Platt, *Journal of a Tour through Egypt*, I, 273.

(85) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, II, 456.

(86) Wilkinson, *Modern Egypt and Thebes*, I, 387.

to search for manuscripts, but all that he found were some Syriac, together with a couple of Ethiopic fragments. The majority of the manuscripts were liturgical, though some of them were biblical.[87] "The excessive suspicion of the monks, however, renders it extremely difficult to induce them to produce their manuscripts, in spite of the extreme penury which surrounds them. For my own part, I made a most lucky discovery of a multitude of Coptic parchment sheets of the sixth and seventh century, already half destroyed, and completely buried beneath a mass of dust. These were given to me without hesitation." [88] When Tischendorf visited the monastery, it was inhabited by over forty monks, and it appeared to him the handsomest and richest of all. "Hence it was they, that, least of all, thanked me for what I supposed a considerable present, which according to my custom I left with them at my departure.... they are too much accustomed to the visits and to the gold of the English." [89]

It was a year after Tischendorf had left the Monastery of the Syrians, that a certain Auguste Pacho approached Dr. W. Cureton, Canon of Westminister and an Orientalist, with the news that a large part of the Syrian library purchased and paid for by the Reverend Henry Tattam was still in the hands of the monks. Thereupon, in 1847, Mr. Pacho was instructed to secure the remaining volumes, and to clear the monastery of every scrap of Syriac to be found there.[90]

Early in 1845, Mr. Pacho, a native of Alexandria and nephew of Jean-Raimond Pacho, who has left behind him a considerable reputation by the posthumous publication of his travels in Africa,[91] made a visit to London, in the hope of obtaining some confidential employment, for which his intimate knowledge of oriental manners rendered him admirably qualified. He was introduced to Dr. Cureton by a letter from Mr. Reinaud who happened to be President de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres of the Institute of France. In 1847, after having returned to Egypt, Mr. Pacho informed Dr. Cureton of being in possession of 200 volumes with many fragments and loose leaves which he had procured from the Monastery of the Syrians. In the same year he submitted them to the Trustees of the British Museum.

That it was not easy for Mr. Pacho to purchase the manuscripts

---

(87) Tischendorf, *Travels in the East*, 52.

(88) *Ibid.*

(89) *Ibid.*, 53.

(90) Cureton, *Festal Letters of Athanasius*, v.

(91) *Cf.* J.R. Pacho, *Relation d'un voyage dans le Marmariques, le Cyrenaique, et les oasis d'Audjelah et de Maradèh*, Paris, 1827.

is evident from the following account. The monks were greatly afraid to part with their treasure, for the very day they had delivered the books to Dr. Tattam's agent, and received the payment, they were deprived of the tenure of a tract of land on the borders of the Nile, which they held under the Pasha for the maintenance of their establishment. This loss they considered as a punishment from heaven.[92]

For six weeks, therefore, Mr. Pacho remained in company of the monks at the end of which he had gained such good will that they ventured to show him the remainder of the library and even to treat with him for the purchase of it.

To be certain that he had purchased all the manuscripts, Mr. Pacho withheld for a time the remaining part of the total sum to be paid, making sure that no manuscript had been concealed or retained by the monks. When he found that no more books were produced, he concluded that he had, indeed, obtained the whole of the remaining part of the library, since the anxiety evinced by the monks to obtain the money was ineffectual to discover any additional fragments.

Before he ultimately delivered the whole of the amount, he required the monks to sign a document, in which they affirmed that they had sold to him all their Syriac manuscripts, and that, if any should be discovered in their monastery, or elsewhere in their possession, these were to become at once the property of Mr. Pacho. Further, to be still more secure, he required the hegoumenos to publish a sentence of excommunication against any one of the monks who should have kept any part of this Syriac collection. One of the monks, who had concealed a part of a book, was terrified by this denunciation, and sent it afterwards to Mr. Pacho.[93]

The British Museum obtained more than 170 items. Still, when in 1851, Mr. Pacho offered an additional ten manuscripts for sale to the Trustees of the Museum, the suspicion was justified that he had betrayed the authorities in London. That Mr. Pacho did not clear out the monastery is evident from the fact that still in 1921 fragments of Syriac manuscripts were found there.[94] Furthermore, we know that Mr. Pacho sold several manuscripts to the Imperial Public Library in St. Petersburg in 1852.

In February 1852, Heinrich Brugsch journeyed to Egypt at the order of King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia for the purpose of scientific explorations. Arriving at the Monastery of the Syrians, he was heartily welcomed by the monks who were much relieved at seeing

---

(92) Cureton, *op. cit.*, ix.

(93) *Ibid.*, xi.

(94) Evelyn White, *loc. cit.*

European visitors rather than Bedouins.[95] Brugsch reports about the prayers of the monks which they offer three times a day, before sunrise, at noon and in the evening. Though the water which was offered to them was rather salty and bad, Brugsch and his colleagues were greatly impressed by the hospitality that the monks showed to them. Finally, after visiting the church and the refectory, he went to the library where his every movement was carefullly watched by the monks. "We expected to see an orderly library with books arranged on shelves, but what a chaotic disorder. About 40 volumes, mostly Arabic and Coptic manuscripts, were lying around, torn out pages from books covered the dirty floor, the covers of the books either rotten or eaten up by worms. And some of these manuscripts could easily date back four to five centuries. To buy them from the monks, however, was impossible indeed. For certain Englishmen had recently bought several hundred manuscripts for very little money from the library of Dair al-Barâmûs which they sold for much more money."[96] Brugsch was told that every manuscript in the monastery contained a warning that it was not to be sold to any stranger under the threat of losing eternal salvation. The following day, Heinrich Brugsch went to the church service which, however, did not impress him greatly. Obviously upset by the lack of discipline of the monks during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, he sharply criticized their behaviour.

The first Protestant missionaries to Egypt were five Germans who were sent by the Church Missionary Society in 1825. Restrained from direct work among the Muslims, they turned their efforts chiefly to the Copts. Since for many years they had met with no opposition from the Coptic patriarch, they found a free opening for the sale and distribution of the Bible and Christian tracts. They were even allowed to preach in Coptic churches and monasteries.[97] Though there is no evidence that the early Protestants went to the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, it is very likely that the four desert monasteries were included in their "mission." The first American missionary associated with the United Presbyterian Church to go to the Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n Natrûn was the Reverend Gulian Lansing, who visited the Monastery of Abû Maqâr and that of the Syrians in 1862. In the Monastery of Abû Maqâr he met a certain Abûnâ Makârî whom a year later Dr. Lansing met at Dair Sitt Dimiânah. Abûnâ Makârî accompanied the American

---

(95) Brugsch, *Wanderung nach den Natronklöstern in Aegypten*, 25.

(96) *Ibid.*, 47.

(97) Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society*, I, 227-8; Addison, *The Christian Approach to the Moslem*, 141.

on a desert walk from the Monastery of Abû Maqâr to the Monastery of the Syrians. "Then, he was glad to walk with me six hours over the desert to the other convent for a few piastres. . . . I found him in our long walk a very attentive and interested listener to the doctrines of Protestantism." [98]

In addition to the Presbyterian missionaries, Anglican missionaries to the Jews in Egypt showed considerable interest in the Coptic Church and the monasteries. In 1887, the Reverend R. Raikes Bromage, Parish Priest of Christ Church, Frome, accompanied by Mr. John Sidley, Abûnâ Butrus, and Surîâl Effendî Saîd, visited the four monasteries in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. The Patriarch had written numerous introductory letters which enabled the party to be graciously received at all monasteries. In this connection it is interesting to note, that the Reverend R.R. Bromage was permitted to celebrate the Divine Mysteries according to the Anglican Rite in the main church of the Dair al-Barâmûs. "Mr. Sidley served, and Suriel Effendi Saîd understanding English, we were able to have it fully choral, with hymns 215 and 313 *Ancient and Modern*." This incident is important in so far as we see in the Rev. Bromage's celebration the first non-Latin Western Communion Service celebrated in a Coptic Monastery.[99]

There is no doubt that the Syrian Monastery attracted pilgrims and visitors throughout the 19th century, though many of them were either Egyptians or people working with the Salt and Soda Company at Bîr Hooker. The numerous graffiti on the walls of the choir of the Church of al-'Adhrâ testify to the frequent visitors. An inscription written in 1801 commemorates the visit of a certain Farag'allah Atabawî (?). 'Asaâd Nasr and Macarius Antonius who were in the monastery in 1828 inscribed their names on the south side of the choir and added the usual petition for the blessings of God. An employee of the Salt and Soda Company, Mr. Costandi, came to the monastery in 1861.

In 1873, Greville J. Chester visited the monastery and wrote his "Notes on the Coptic Dayrs of the Wady Natroun". Being a very careful student of ancient architecture, Chester writes about three churches in the monastery: "'Adhra Mariam, Abou Hennes and Baramooti Syriani and 'Adhra Bis Syriani, while three others lay in ruins." In the Church of Abû Hennis, Chester saw an epiphany tank as well as relics of Saints and a pulpit with ancient icons. Here, Chester also saw

---

(98) Lansing, *Egypt's Princes*, 389.

(99) Filothaus, *A Catechism of the Coptic Church with an Introduction by the Rev. R. Raikes Bromage*, London, 1894, viii. Hymn 215 in *A and M* is "The Church's one foundation," hymn 313 is "Draw nigh and take the Body of the Lord."

an ancient Arab chandelier which in form was quite similar to the glass lamps from the Mosque of Sultan Hussein.[100]

Probably the first guide to list the Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn is Murray's *Handbook for Travellers to Lower and Upper Egypt*. After describing the main features of the Monastery of Abû Maqâr, Murray continues: "Three hours from Dair Abu Makar is Dair Suriani, the most beautiful convent of all. It was built by one Hennes whose tree is still seen about a couple of miles to the southward near the ruins of two other convents. It is supposed to resemble Noah's ark in form, though in no other respects; for here the admission of women is strictly prohibited. This convent contains three churches, one of them Adra Bi Suriani has a beautifully carved screen door inlaid with wood and ivory, and an iconostasis also inlaid with ivory; in a chapel is a curious double picture on a panel with two saints on one side, and a crowned female head, perhaps Empress Helena, on the other."[101]

The second monastery to be visited by Fr. Jullien and his party in 1881 was that of the Syrians. Like all previous visitors, Fr. Jullien had heard the story of the miraculous tamarind tree. In the Church of al-'Adhrâ, he is one of the first travellers to notice the ancient stucco-ornaments which he compares with those of the Mosque of 'Umar. Apparently, the missionaries stayed only for a very short time, for, in the evening the Qummus Mîkhâîl accompanied them to the neighbouring Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî.[102]

In the winter of 1883-84, Alfred J. Butler, Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford, visited the Monastery of the Syrians. This, then, is an excerpt of his observations. "No one whose imagination has been kindled by the romantic story of Curzon's visit to the monks of the Natrûn valley, would resist a feeling of keen excitement as he neared the walls of Dair as-Surîânî, where Curzon discovered that horde of ancient literary treasure which alone would make his name famous. The excitement is not lessened if the traveller carries, as the present writer carried, about his waist a heavy belt of gold, wherewith he hopes to retrieve some fragment of treasure still remaining: and even if the sense of adventure were wanting, one could not resist a novel feeling of fascination in surveying the singular beauty of the convent. For as the eye follows it, half-climbing the gentle slope of a desert hill, half-resting on the broad flat summit, its lines are extremely grace-

---

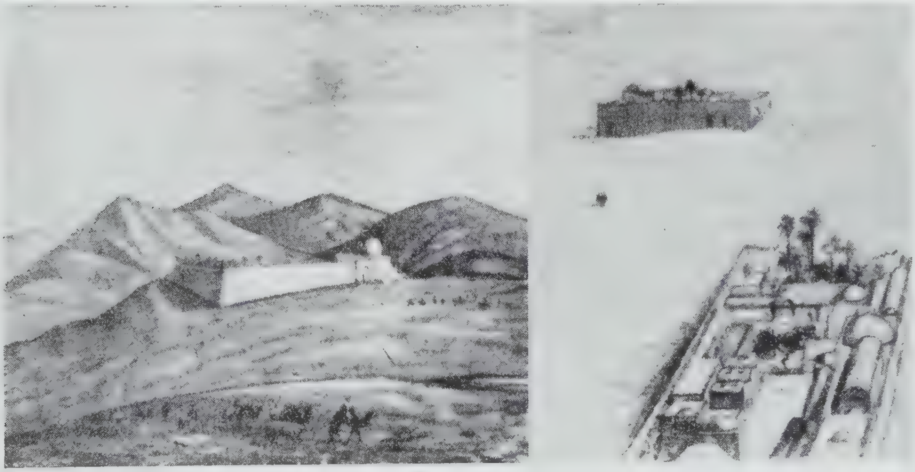
(100) Chester, "Notes on the Coptic Dayrs...," 105 f.

(101) Murray, *op. cit.*, II, 365.

(102) Jullien, *L'Egypte, Souvenirs Bibliques et Chrétiens*, 45.

ful.... Traces of Syriac literature remain there even to this day, but there are no Syrian inmates now, nor are there either books or monks of Abyssinian origin, such as Curzon discovered.[103]

"The monks, as usual, received us with great kindness, and were eager to show us over the monastery. They pointed out to us the ancient and venerable tamarind, a rare but not unknown tree in Egypt, which is said to have grown from a walking stick thrust in the ground by St. Ephrem, and they told us the legend, just as their predecessors have told it to travellers for generations before them."[104] Butler continues his account by a very careful description of the churches of the monastery adding to it a plan of the Church of al-'Adhrâ.[105] It is interesting to note, that Butler's account was considered for many decades the standard source of information about the desert monasteries.



Jullien, 1883 *Butler, 1883*

Two artists' conceptions. Left : Dair as-Surîân from the north-east. Right : Dair as-Surîân from the keep with Dair Anbâ Bishoî in the background.

Isambert's travel-guide published in 1890 is the second of its kind to make a more detailed mention of the Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. Thus he advises the travellers to visit the Monastery of the Syrians which he considered to be the main monastery of the group which was inhabited by thirty or forty monks.[106]

---

(103) Butler, *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt,* I, 316.

(104) *Ibid.,* I, 318.

(105) *Ibid.,* I, 318-326.

(106) Isambert, *Itinéraire de l'Orient,* 440.

The next travel-guide to notice the monasteries of the Desert of Scetis is the Baedeker of 1892. Travellers, coming from the Oasis of Siwah, are advised to stop and visit the Natrûn Monasteries, of which the Monastery of the Syrians is the most outstanding one. It was built by a Saint named Honnes or Johannes the Dwarf, and is at present occupied by thirty to forty monks. This monastery contains an Abyssinian college, an observation which Baedeker no doubt derived from the account of Lord Curzon. Those who are interested in discovering ancient manuscripts are warned by Baedeker "that there is little chance of finding any more valuable manuscripts here, as all, except those required for the religious services have been transferred to the library of the Coptic patriarch in Cairo."[107] He continues by saying that a visit to the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî and al-Barâmûs scarcely repays the trouble and is not to be recommended.

Following Butler, Joseph Strzygowski was probably the first scholar of Coptic architecture to study the now famous stucco ornaments in the Church of al-'Adhrâ.[108] It was he who drew attention to the relationship which exists between the stucco-work of the church and that of the Mosque of Ibn Tûlûn in Cairo.[109] The question still to be answered, then, is the date of these outstanding decorations. Is the work to be ascribed to Matthew and Abraham, the founders of the church, or to the hegoumenos Moses of Nisibis? The studies undertaken by Strzygowski, and published in 1901, have ever since attracted students of architecture to come to the Monastery of the Syrians.

A year later, the Coptologist A. Gayet published his book *L'Art Copte* with an extensive study on the architectural features of the Monastery of the Syrians, adding to his valuable description sketches and drawings of the churches and their interior.[110]

The first ladies to visit the Monastery of the Syrians by themselves may well have been Dr. Agnes Smith Lewis and her sister Mrs. Margaret Dunlop Gibson. In 1904, travelling by camel from Cairo, the two ladies had first called on the monks of Dair Abû Maqâr. From there, they rode to the Syrian monastery which impressed them as being by far the prettiest of the monasteries of Nitria, Dair Anbâ Bishoî coming second.[111] They were conducted to a small room in the qasr, where they found two little cupboards full of books, and a stone

---

(107) Baedeker, *Egypt*, 1892, 348.

(108) Strzygowski, "Der Schmuck der älteren el-Hadrakirche im syrischen Kloster der sketischen Wüste," 357.

(109) The mosque is dated 879 A.D.

(110) Gayet, *L'Art Copte*, 177-185.

(111) Lewis, "Hidden Egypt," 755.

reservoir, partly beneath the level of the floor, containing a collection of the loose leaves. Here, Mrs. Gibson noticed two very fine Coptic manuscripts of the New Testament dated respectively 1220 and 1256. While being conducted around by the monks, they were told about a hermit who for twelve years had lived far away in a cave. Recently, he had returned to the monastery and was now living in a cell all by himself, receiving daily some bread and water from the other monks.

It was at this monastery that Dr. Lewis photographed fragments of the *Mythological Acts of the Apostles*. We read in the preface of her volume, how by accepting the kind help of the Egyptian Salt and Natron Company at Bîr Hooker, she was enabled to pitch her tent outside the gate of the monastery and how the monks made available to her a dark room to change the film plates.

In 1905, Ewald Falls, a member of the German Kaufmann Expedition to the Libyan Desert, visited the Monastery of the Syrians. Again we hear the story of the Tree of St. Ephraem with a trunk of over 3 feet in diameter.[112] In the Church of al-ʿAdhrâ, Falls noticed two bronze hoops hanging from the ceiling by chains. These were ancient chandeliers which seemed similar to those used in the ancient basilica of St. Peter at Rome. He described in minute detail the beautiful wood work of the haikal doors, and seemed to be much impressed by the treasures of the monastery in general. However, he remarks about the losses which the Nitrian monasteries suffered through the thefts of foreigners, which can never be restored, as well as the destruction due to ignorant monks, who permitted pieces of the tarsia work to be broken off and carried away as souvenirs.[113]

In 1895, Qummus Hannâ Isnawî was followed by Qummus Mâksîmûs Salîb as hegoumenos of the monastery. The records of the monastery inform us that during the hegoumenship of Maksîmûs (1895-1939) many improvements were carried out, especially with regard to the walls. The well and the waterwheel were repaired, and the sum of L.E. 10,800 was spent on general repairs and improvements.[114]

In 1906, E.A. Wallis Budge published his *Handbook for Egypt and the Sudan*. In his chapter, "from Cairo to the Oasis of Jupiter Ammon," he speaks of the advantage that the traveller has in paying a visit to the Monasteries in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. Though some of the information provided by Budge is very enlightening, he makes, on the other hand,

---

(112) Falls, *Three Years in the Libyan Desert*, 87.

(113) *Ibid.*, 88.

(114) Monks of Dair as-Surîân, *op. cit.*, 58.

some rather serious errors. For example, he states: A little further to the West from the Monastery of Abû Maqâr is the Syrian Monastery, which was built by John the Dwarf, in the reign of Constantine, the son of the Empress Helena.... It was formerly in a flourishing condition, and in the fifth and sixth centuries possessed a very valuable library.... At the present time there are no manuscripts of importance in the Natron Valley, and only those who are interested in archaeology are recommended to visit it."[115]

In 1909-1910, the Syrian Monastery was visited by members of the Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expedition. Mr. W.J. Palmer-Jones, Mr. W. Hauer and Mr. H. Burton spent several weeks making plans of the main structures, which they supplemented by drawings, sketches and photographs.

In the following year, 1910-1911, Mr. Palmer-Jones revisited the monastery accompanied by the artist, Mr. Walter Tyndale. After having departed from the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî, they went to that of the Syrians. "A spreading sycamore-tree, with a goat and one or two sheep lying in its shade, gave the place a less dead-alive look than had its neighbour." Here, Palmer-Jones, who was an architect, and Tyndale, an artist, had their lunch in the company of a hen and a brood of chicks which seemed to appreciate the samples of their food. "The church was very interesting, and a more important structure than the previous one, but so dimly lighted, that we had to wait till our eyes got used to the gloom before we could distinguish anything.... I started a drawing of an interesting subject, one which might have consoled me for my disappointment in the other convent,[116] had I been able to see more clearly what I was about."[117] Apparently, only nine monks inhabited the monastery at the time of their visit.

In 1912, Samuel Flury, following the excavations at Samarra,[118] studied the stucco ornaments in the al-'Adhrâ Church at Dair as-Surîân, and came to the conclusion that the stucco-work must have been done after the construction of the Mosque of Ibn Tûlûn. Furthermore, Flury points out the relation which exists between the Islamic art at Samarra and that seen at Dair as-Surîân, but feels that probably Cairene workmen created the ornaments about the beginning of the tenth century.[119]

---

(115) Budge, *Cook's Handbook for Egypt and the Sudan,* 509-512.

(116) Tyndale, *An Artist in Egypt,* 102. The other monastery was Dair Anbâ Bishoî where Tyndale did not obtain the permission to sketch the church.

(117) *Ibid.*

(118) Samarra on the Tigris, north of Bagdad, was the Abbasid residence from 836-876 A.D.

(119) Flury, "Die Gipsornamente des Der es Surjani," 71-81.

In his first *Streifzüge* through the churches and monasteries of Egypt, Johann Georg, Duke of Saxony, visited, in 1912, the Monastery of the Syrians.[120] Though the description of his experiences extends over seven pages it contains little information that is worth recording. As in the case of his visit to the Monastery of al-Barâmûs, he was ceremonially welcomed by the hegoumenos and the monks of the monastery. One of his great and impressive experiences at Dair as-Surîân was his attendance at the Divine Liturgy in the Church of al-'Adhrâ which he describes in minute detail.[121] Among other things of interest he mentions the wall paintings which he considers to be of Syrian origin, and belonging to the 10th century. Again, as in the Dair al-Barâmûs, he was moved to criticize modern renovations. "Alles Alte ist entzückend, alles Neue geschmacklos." [122] Obviously, Johann Georg was a little confused about the identity of the Church of the 40 Martyrs since he heard the church also referred to as the Church of the 49 Hermits. Evelyn White in his classical work, *The Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn,* identified this church as belonging to the Forty-nine Martyrs, a mistake which the monks are eager to point out. In the keep the Duke noticed a pile of manuscripts which were strewn about in a disorderly manner, though otherwise his whole impression of the Syrian Monastery exceeded his highest expectations.

During the First World War, members of the British Army went to the monastery, staying in its vicinity for a few days. Graffiti in the Church of al-'Adhrâ are evidence that several soldiers entered the monastery in the latter part of March, 1916.

In the spring of 1920, Hugh Evelyn White spent several weeks in the various monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn completing the work begun by Mr. Palmer-Jones. The result of the work of Evelyn White, W. Hauser and Mr. Burton is published in the three volume masterpiece of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn Monasteries.

In February 1923, Dr. William H.P. Hatch departed from the Monastery of Abû Maqâr, and following the "Path of the Angels" arrived at the Dair as-Surîân. The monks showed him the famous tamarind tree. Here, they also saw the mummies of two former hegoumenoi of the monastery, one a Syrian, and the other a Copt. There were sixteen monks at the monastery when Dr. Hatch and his party visited it.[123]

The third monastery visited by M.A. Kammerer in 1925 was that of the Syrians. His observations are few, and most of his information

---

(120) Johann Georg, *Streifzüge durch die Kirchen und Klöster Aegyptens,* 30-36.

(121) *Ibid.,* 31.

(122) *Ibid.,* 35.

(123) Hatch, "A Visit to the Coptic Convents in Nitria," 99.

is derived from other sources. He has the impression that this monastery which is built in the same style as that of Anbâ Bishoî is little older than the other.[124]

Some fifteen years after his first visit to Dair as-Surîân, Johann Georg, Duke of Saxony, paid a second visit to the monastery in 1927. In an introductory statement to his description he mentions that the monastery was never destroyed, and for this reason it still looks as if it belonged to the first millenium. He feels that the monks may have bribed the Bedouins, but the monks themselves apparently told him a different story. The hegoumenoi of the monastery have always been known as great magicians who had owned a picture representing many soldiers. When the Bedouins were ready to attack the monastery, this picture was taken to the gate, and affected, so it seems, by the sight of this picture, the assailants ran away.

This time, Johann Georg was shown the Church of Anbâ Bishoî. Here, he continues, there is a very interesting altar belonging to the era of the foundation of the monastery. Before his departure, the monks presented him with a basket of fragments of manuscripts, and he was permitted to take along what he desired. Thus he discovered among the fragments documents belonging to the 12th and 13th century.[125]

In 1928, K.A.C. Creswell, the distinguished scholar of Islamic architecture, went to the Monastery of the Syrians to study the stucco ornaments in the Church of al-‘Adhrâ. These Creswell places into the beginning of the 10th century. He explains the Tulunide character of the ornaments by referring to the journey of the hegoumenos to Bagdad which took place round about 914 A.D. On his return, the hegoumenos ordered the church to be decorated with those stucco ornaments which can still be seen. In the same year, Herbert Ricke went to the Monastery of the Syrians to photograph and to study the stucco ornaments which he published in his volume *Aegypten.*[126] The architectural-archaeological work was continued in the Monastery of the Syrians by the Commité de Conservation des Monuments de l’Art Arabe, and Ugo Monneret de Villard published in 1928 his study on the churches of the monastery. His principal attention was devoted to the ancient al-‘Adhrâ Church, and he comes to the conclusion that the decorative cycles of

---

(124) Kammerer, "Les Monastères," 137.

(125) Johann Georg, *Neue Streifzüge durch die Kirchen und Klöster Aegyptens*, 44-45.

(126) Borchardt, Ricke, *Aegypten,* XVI, 62-65.

the church, the stucco ornaments, the doors of the sanctuary and the choir and the wall-paintings should be attributed to the period of Moses of Nisibis, that is to say the first half of the 10th century.[127]

In 1930 and 1931, Prince 'Umar Tûsûn accompanied by Dr. Puy-Haubert and Professor Breccia visited the Monastery of the Syrians. In his *Etude sur le Wadi Natroun* the Prince gives the number of monks who inhabited the Syrian Monastery from the middle of the 17th century to the 20th century. The following table is taken from his study.[128]

1667	14 monks	1719	10 monks	1767	11 monks
1780	20 monks	1835	40 monks	1847	46 monks
1852	56 monks	1897	40 monks	1906	18 monks
1924	58 monks	1931	49 monks		

In the middle of the 20th century, the Monastery of the Syrians was the best known and most frequently visited monastery in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. This was due partly to its favourable situation, at the same time it should not be overlooked that it is the most progressive monastery. The visitors' books of the monastery bear witness to the large number of visitors from many countries who have ventured to the Desert of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. The following figures represent only the foreign visitors, though included in these figures there are a number of groups. In 1950, the monastery was visited by 14 Americans, 16 British, 4 Greeks. In the two years 1953 and 1954, 62 Americans, 7 Austrians, 3 Belgians, 39 British, 15 French, 32 Germans, 18 Greeks, 32 Italians, 1 Russian, 3 Swiss, visited the monastery. From 1955 to 1957, 33 Americans, 8 Austrians, 22 British, 1 Canadian, 4 Czechs, 29 French, 206 Germans, 3 Italians, 1 Russian, 3 Swedes, 21 Swiss, visited the monks. From 1958 to 1960, the Ma'adi Community Church (the Church of St. John the Baptist), went on eight pilgrimages to the Monastery of the Syrians and the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî involving altogether seventy people.[129] Among the distinguished visitors we find the Danish Ambassador and leading personalities from the American Embassy, the American University at Cairo and the United Nations Organization. A historic visit took place in January 1959 when the Patriarch of Antioch, Anbâ Ighnâtîûs Ya'qûb III, came to the Monastery of the Syrians, where he was shown around the churches, the

---

(127) Monneret de Villard, *Les Eglises du Monastère des Syriens,* 29.

(128) Toussoun, *Etude sur le Wadi Natroun,* 27-28.

(129) Rombach is mistaken when he writes: "Es sind Männerbereiche die keine Frau betreten darf." Rombach, *Aegyptische Reise,* 166. A large number of the visitors are ladies.

library, the press, and talked with the monks.[130]

The monks observe five seasons of fasting, during which visitors are not permitted to enter the Monastery ; forty-three days before the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, three days commemorating Jonah in the Whale,[131] fifty-five days before Lent,[132] the Fast of the Holy Apostles which extends from Pentecost until July 12, and fifteen days in commemoration of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, from August 7 to August 22. Wednesdays and Fridays are fast days throughout the year, except during Paschaltide, the fifty days from Easter to Pentecost. Apart from total abstinence from meat, fish and dairy products during the Fasts, the quantity of food and the length of the period between eating depends entirely on the monk himself.

8. The Monastery in the Middle of the 20th Century

To-day, the Monastery of the Syrians is the leading monastery of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn monastic group, and this, to a great extent, is due to the leadership of Anbâ Tawfîlus (Theophilus), who spends a great deal of time in the monastery with the monks, thus exerting a profound influence upon the institution.

Before mentioning the many innovations and new projects, it is necessary to examine briefly the ancient buildings, which are reminders of a long and distinguished past.

The shape of the monastery has given rise to a strange interpretation by the monks. The proportion of its length to its breadth is roughly that of a ship, and this has led to the tradition, already recorded by Sir Gardner Wilkinson, and still mentioned to visitors today, that the monastery was built on the model of the Ark of Noah.[133]

The principal church of the monastery is that of al-'Adhrâ. Because of its artistic treasures, this church has repeatedly attracted the attention of archaeologists and architects.[134] There is scarcely any doubt that it belongs to the most ancient constructions of the Monas-

---

(130) "Where Syria and Egypt meet." *Watani*, February 1, 1959, p. 7.

(131) The Fast of Jonah which is observed on the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of the second week before the Fast of Heraclius or the Pre-Lenten Fast.

(132) The Fast of Heraclius is observed during the week before Lent, and together with Lent comprises fifty-five days of fasting. The Eve of the Nativity of Our Lord, and the Eve of the Epiphany are days of fasting.

(133) Wilkinson, *op. cit.*, I, 391.

(134) Flury, *op. cit.*, Gayet, *op. cit.*, Strzygowski, *op. cit.*, Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, *et al.*

tery, and that it should be placed into the 10th century. A Syriac note quoted by Evelyn White states that "in the days of Prior Saliba they wished to renew the vault that is over the door of the church, and when they had dug, they found a tablet written in Syriac and Egyptian : Marutha and Habîb, Tekritans, notables deceased, they who bought this monastery for the Syrians for 12,000 dinars — we beg you brethren, who find this memorial to pray for them." [135] Though this memorial is no longer there, the construction mentioned may well be related to the present north entrance of the church. This means, that a date around 980 A.D.[136] is reasonable to accept for the building of the church. The eastern part of the church has three haikals, to the west of these is the choir and still further west the main nave which is flanked by two lateral aisles.

In the nave, almost in the middle, is the basin for the Maundy Thursday Rite of Foot-washing. At the eastern end of the north aisle stands the feretory of St. John Kame. In the semi-dome above the western end of the nave is the famous wall-painting of the Ascension of Christ which shows the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Apostles present at this event, a painting which has been placed in the first third of the 10th century. From the western end of the north aisle one passes through a narrow passage to the Cell of Anbâ Bishoî, a small square structure with an altar built against the east wall. The cell is roofed by a vaulted ceiling into which a hook has been driven. The monks say that Anbâ Bishoî used to pray in this cell day and night, his hair being tied to the hook to prevent him from falling asleep or sinking down. Furthermore, I have heard the story of a supposed tunnel leading from the Cell of Anbâ Bishoî to the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî. The position of the cell in this prominent place leads one to suppose that it was used in ancient times by some important solitary.

The most outstanding attraction is, however, neither the Cell of Anbâ Bishoî nor the beautiful wall-paintings in the semi-domes, but the choir and the sanctuary doors of the church with their magnificent ivory inlaid ornaments. While the choir door has only six rows, the sanctuary door has seven rows of panels. The sanctuary doors have

---

(135) Quoted by Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, III, 171.

(136) Manuscript evidence places hegoumenos Saliba in the last quarter of the 10th century. *Ibid.*, II, 445.

caught the interest of many artists.[137] The first row has six figures. The two central panels show Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary, the second and fifth panels show the Egyptian and the Syrian patriarchs, St. Mark the Evangelist and St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, while the two outer panels show the two great patriarchs, Anbâ Dîsqûrus (Dioscorus), the 25th Patriarch of Alexandria (444-454), and Anbâ Sâwîrûs I, the first Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch (512-518). It is interesting to notice the balance between the Egyptian and Syrian ecclesiastical dignitaries, which shows the double allegiance of the Syrian monks to the two patriarchates.

The second row of panels shows a repeated pattern of circles so interlaced as to form crosses. The third row has in each of the six fields six linked circles which are arranged in pairs, each circle containing a cross. The fourth row, though somewhat damaged, has in each panel a cross enclosed by a four-leafed shamrock with a trefoil at the junction of each leaf. The fifth row has in each panel six swastikas enclosed by circles. The sixth row is a dark grille on a white ground based on linked circles. The seventh row has a pattern of a plain cross in a double-stepped framing, the design of the cross thus filling the whole panel. The date of this interesting piece of workmanship is to be assigned to the 10th century. A Syriac inscription on the doors states that they were made in the reign of Anbâ Ghabrîâl I, the 57th Patriarch of Alexandria (910-921), and of Anbâ Yuhannis IV, the 25th Patriarch of Antioch (902-922).

The semi-domes which constitute in part the roof of the choir have two interesting wall-paintings. The southern semi-dome has the

---

(137) Abûnâ Makârî as-Surîânî has offered the following interpretation of the panel designs of the seven rows of the haikal doors. The first row, which has the figures of Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Mark, St. Ignatius, St. Dioscorus and St. Severus stands for the Apostolic Age. The second row of panels stands for the expansion of the Church, the cooperation of all Christtians in spreading the Word of God. The third row is identified with the period of the formation of the Episcopal Sees of the Ancient Church (Antioch, St. Peter; Jerusalem, St. James; Alexandria, St. Mark; Constantinople, St. Andrew; Rome, St. Peter; Carthage, St. Aggrippinus). The quatrofoils of the fourth row are interpreted as crescents, which surround the cross, and the panel is described as representing the expansion of Islam. The fifth row with its swastikas symbolizes the rise of modern materialistic ideologies, as illustrated by the German National Socialist Movement which used the swastika as national insignia. The sixth row symbolizes the weakness of the Church, whilst the seventh row is to be interpreted from an eschatological point of view. It stands for the unity and the dynamic expansion of the Church.

Annunciation and the Nativity of our Lord, the northern semidome the Falling-Asleep (Dormition) of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The main haikal of the church has the above-mentioned stucco ornaments, about which several scholars have expressed their opinion with regard to their origin. The altar is covered with a slab of black stone which was probably imported by the Syrians at the time of the building of the church.[138] This church is presently used for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy during the summer months, while during the winter months the monks hold their services in the Cave Church.

The Church of the Lady Mary (Sitt Miriam), or the Cave Church, as the monks refer to it, is situated in the northern part of the monastery. The church has three haikals and a nave with a marble lakan. When this church is in use, the relics of St. John Kame are removed from the Church of al-'Adhrâ and are placed on the north side of the doorway of this church. In the choir of this church, Butler noticed an ancient pulpit, "of which the decayed remains show traces of ivory figures of saints which were once inlaid, one in each panel." [139] At one time, one of the interesting features of this church was the Nubian marble tray, that is now kept in the museum of the monastery. It is likely that either Abyssinian or Nubian monks transferred the tray to the Syrian Monastery when their respective monastery or cells were abandoned.

The Church of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste is situated north of the Church of al-'Adhrâ adjoining the east of the porch. It is in this church that Anbâ Akhristûdulûs (Christodoulos), the Abûnâ of Ethiopia in the beginning of the 17th century, was buried. Apart from this, the church is of little interest.[140]

The Church of St. John Kame which was situated to the west of the Cave Church was noticed by Sonnini who saw in it a feretory containing many relics of saints among whom was St. Marmarotous,[141] and Chester saw here also an altar which was surmounted by a wooden

---

(138) The altar slabs of the other monasteries are of white marble.

(139) Butler, *op. cit.*, I, 319.

(140) Evelyn White is mistaken in identifying this church with the Forty-nine martyrs of Abû Maqâr. This church is dedicated to the Forty martyrs of Sebaste who are commemorated on the the 13th Barmahat. These martyrs were soldiers who served under Licinius, a pagan officer under Constantine. They remained faithful to their Christian confession and after being stoned, they were immersed for a whole night in a frozen lake and died. On the third day after their martyrdom they appeared in a vision to the Bishop of Sebaste and guided by them, the Bishop recovered the remains of the martyrs.

(141) Sonnini, *op. cit.*, 364.

baldachin.[142] At the time of Evelyn White's visit, four posts belonging to this baldachin were stored in the qasr. Since then, they have been transferred to the museum. This site, which was once occupied by the Abyssinian College, as mentioned by Lord Curzon, is now being transformed into a qurban bakery and a new refectory, where some monks revived the ancient practice of the communal meal.

The qasr of the monastery stands to the west of the northern gate and comprises a basement and three upper floors. On the first story Lord Curzon discovered many fine manuscripts. The second story is of less historical interest while the third contains the Church of St. Michael. The church is used twice a year on the feasts of the Archangel. An ancient icon of St. Michael dated 1472 decorates the north wall of the church. At the time of Evelyn White's visit the remains of the monastery library were kept "in a small vaulted room, in two modern cupboards, in which books of all ages and sizes are packed in a mass and a rubbish bin to which loose or torn pages are consigned." [143] All books have since been removed to the library on the ground floor of the guesthouse. The qasr has been greatly improved by replastering the walls on the inside as well as on the outside. This operation was done in 1948, under the able guidance of the present bishop, Anbâ Tawfîlus.

Though at one time the monastery qasr was inhabited by numerous solitaries, at present only Abûnâ Fîlûtâûs (Philothaus) as-Surîânî lives from time to time in the qasr, exchanging this abode for his cave, northwest of the monastery. He inhabits the first room to the east on the second story.

Around the traditional tamarind tree there has been built the new printing-press with an Italian-made manually-controlled printing machine. Here pamphlets, catalogue cards and small books dealing with theological studies are printed. The types are all Arabic with a few Coptic and Latin characters. The overseer of the press is Abûnâ Antûnîûs, a scholar and theologian, while the printer is Abûnâ Tawdrûs as-Surîânî.[144] In front of the printing press, at least during the summer months, the monks assemble daily around 5 p.m. for vespers.

The water tower, which was built in the eastern part of the Monastery in 1955-56, provides running water. It is 13 m. high and has a capacity of 45 m³.

---

(142) Chester, *op. cit.*, 108.

(143) Evelyn White, *op. cit.*, III, 177.

(144) Among the publications of the monastery press are eleven volumes in Arabic, sixteen pamphlets in Arabic, and several books and pamphlets are in the process of being printed.

The guesthouse is a Levantine style structure which was built in 1914 by Qummus Maksîmûs Salîb (1895-1939). He was a great leader and administrator, and we hear that under his administration L.E. 10,800 were spent on improvements in the monastery.[145] On the first story of the guesthouse there is the reception room, a conference room and three bedrooms. The ground floor of the same building is occupied by a library which is constantly growing due to new acquisitions. The library contains over 3,000 books and several hundred valuable manuscripts, which were catalogued by the late Yassâ 'Abd al-Masîh, librarian of the Coptic Museum. The books are divided into Biblica, Theologica, Commentaries, Patristics, Hagiographia, Liturgica, Church History, Dictionaries, Periodicals, *et al.* The library is equipped with several easy-chairs, a catalogue system and a library office. The librarian is Abûnâ Antûnîûs as-Surîânî. Also in the library is the reliquary which was discovered by Walter Hauser in the qasr. The feretory which is said to be contemporary with the haikal screens of the Church of al-'Adhrâ, belongs to the 10th century.[146] Tradition asserts that the feretory contained the relics of Anbâ Sâwîrûs,[147] Anbâ Dîsqûrus (Dioscorus), [148] St. Cyriacus and his mother Julietta,[149] St.

---

(145) Monks of Dair as-Surîân, *op. cit.*, 58.

(146) The representations on the feretory from the right to the left are: St. Michael, St. James, St. John (the Baptist), Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Theodore, St. Eustathius. The contents of the feretory are listed in Ms. 76, Dair as-Surîân, which is a commentary on the Gospel of St. Matthew by St. John Chrysostomus.

(147) St. Severus, Patriarch of Antioch (512-518), was a staunch opponent to the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon. On the accession of the Emperor Justin in 518, Severus was arrested and punished. He escaped to Egypt where he was enthusiastically received, a day which is commemorated on the 2nd Babeh. At the accession of the Emperor Justinian he was summoned to Constantinople and lived there under the protecion of the Empress Theodora. He returned to Egypt, where he died in 539. He is commemorated on the 14th Amshîr.

(148) St. Dioscorus, 25th Patriarch of Alexandria. He is commemorated on the 7th Tût. A disciple of St. Cyril of Alexandria, he was a staunch opponent of the Nestorian doctrines. He represented the Egyptian Church at the Council of Ephesus and at the Council of Chalcedon. He was deposed by the Emperor and exiled to the island of Gangra where he died and was buried.

(149) SS. Cyriacus and Julietta are commemorated on the 15th Abîb. Cyriacus was the three year old son of Julietta who had fled from Rome. Confronted with the governor and faced with the choice of denying Christ, she pointed to her son who denounced the idols and reviled the Emperor. Mother and son were tortured and finally executed.

Theodore the Oriental,[150] the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste,[151] St. James the Persian,[152] St. John the Short,[153] St. Moses the Black,[154] and some hair of St. Mary Magdalene.[155] These relics are now preserved in a separate tube and kept together with those of St. John Kame.

To the north of the library is the new monastery museum which has an exhibition of icons, lamps, seals for stamping the Qurban or Eucharistic Loaf, old weapons used by the Arabs and other Coptologia. To the east of the Church of al-'Adhrâ, that is, between the church and the guesthouse, two cells were recently discovered which may have been used in early days for the baking of the Qurban.

Until the middle of the 20th century the Monastery of the Syrians had only one gate, that is, the one which is situated in the western part of the north wall. A few years ago, the southern part of the east wall was broken through and a gate with an imposing staircase leads to the monastery plantation which was inaugurated by Abûnâ Isîdûrûs in 1945, and which was later supervised by Abûnâ Mitîâs as-Surîânî.

So far, about 20 feddans have been cultivated. Four water pumps supply sufficient water to irrigate the new project — an oasis in the wilderness. The monastery farm which is located in the north-eastern part of the plantation has a large variety of domestic animals including camels, donkeys, cattle, goats, sheep, and poultry. One cannot help but be impressed by the efficient and well organized manner in which this undertaking is being administered. Attached to the eastern wall of the monastery is a garage for the monastery jeep. In order to preserve the farm and the plantation from sand-storms, the land is enclosed by high surrounding walls. The whole undertaking shows intelligent and wise planning.

---

[150] St. Theodore the Oriental is commemorated on the 12th Tûbah. He was the son of Sadrikhos, a friend of Basilides, his mother was Patricia, the sister of Basilides. He suffered martyrdom during the Diocletian persecutions.

[151] *Cf.* p. 275, n. 140.

[152] St. James the Persian is commemorated on the 27th Hatûr. He was an officer of the Persian court and had turned towards Zoroastrianism. Later he abandoned his religion and became a Christian again. The king pointed out to him that this would incur the death penalty, but he stood firm and the executioner cut off his limbs.

[153] St. John the Short or John Colobos is commemorated on the 20th Bâbah. The son of poor parents he joined the ascetic life at the age of eighteen. He lived in the Desert of Scetis, as the disciple of Anbâ Ammûn who before dying told John to make his dwelling by a tree which he had planted as a stick, and which John had watered for three years before it took root. The cell, and later the monastery, was built beside the tree. He became a friend of Anbâ Bishoî and fled with him to the Desert of Clysma, in the Red Sea area, where he died. His body was later transferred to the Monastery of Abû Maqâr. The Monastery of the Syrians claims only one part of the relics of the Saint.

[154] St. Moses the Black is commemorated on the 24th Baûnah. He was an Abyssinian slave who was dismissed by his master. He became a robber, but impressed by the ascetes of the Desert of Scetis, he joined them. On reaching the valley, he met Anbâ Isidore, who took him to St. Macarius. He was ordained priest and lived to the age of seventy-five. He prophesied the raid of the Berbers on the monastic communities of Scetis, and was one of the seven monks who suffered martyrdom at the hands of the Berbers.

[155] St. Mary of Magdala is commemorated on the 28th Adîb. *Cf. Matt.* 28: 1-10, *Mark* 16: 1-10, *Luke* 24:10, *John* 20: 1-18.

In the space between the plantation and the monastery there is a retreat house, where church groups, students and young people can spend time in study and contemplation.

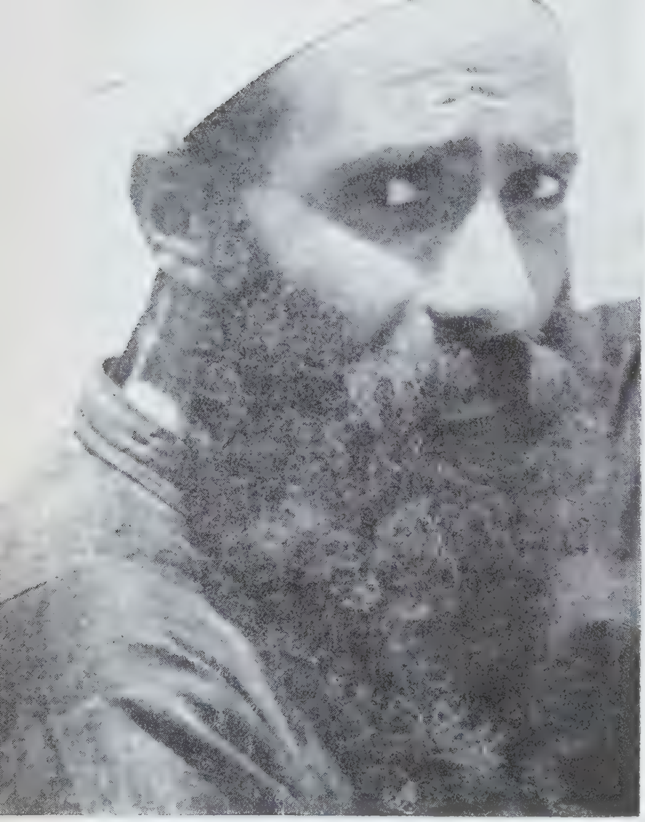
The Monastery is inhabited by about twenty-five monks. Another two or three monks belonging to the monastery reside at Atrîs near Khatâtba, where the Dependency of the monastery is situated. Of the twenty-five monks, over 50 per cent are under forty years of age, and seven monks are not in priest's orders.

One of the best educated and well-versed theologians of the Coptic Church is Abûnâ Antûnîûs as-Surîânî, a graduate of Cairo University. Abûnâ Antûnîûs lived for some years in a cave in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. Then he left the Syrian Monastery with Abûnâ Mattâ al-Maskîn for the Desert of al-Qalamûn. In 1957, he returned to Dair as-Surîân in order to live an ascetic and scholarly life partly in the monastery, partly in his cave, about three km. west of the Monastery.[156]

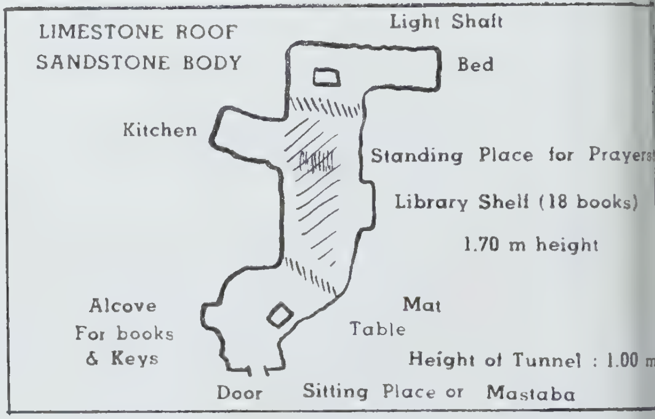
The cave has a sandstone body and a limestone roof. It is about 3.50 m. long, 1 m. wide, and 1.10 m. high, except for a small space which has a height of 1.70 m. which enables the hermit to stand for his prayers. Near the entrance of the cave Abûnâ Antûnîûs has a small desk and a mat where he studies and writes on a Coptic dictionary. A shelf hewn in the rock contains reference books, Bibles, commentaries, and the complete set of the writings of the Church Fathers. Another alcove next to his desk provides some space for additional books and his keys, for the cave can be locked. At the end of the cave is Abûnâ

---

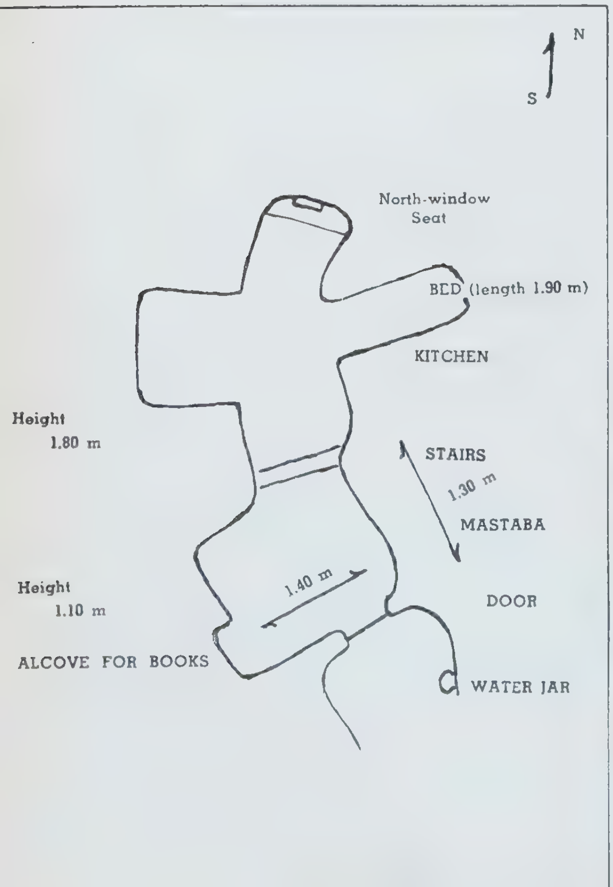
(156) About 3 km. in south-westerly direction from the Dair as-Surîân is situated the Hill of Sarapamon. Two caves are situated on the northern slope, two caves on the southern slope of the hill. Among the monks inhabiting these caves were Abûnâ Mattâ al-Maskîn and Abûnâ 'Abd al-Miriam. 400 metres north of the Hill of Sarapamon is another elevation with several caves, almost all of them covered with sand. These caves were inhabited by Abûnâ Mînâ and Abûnâ Istafânûs.



Abûnâ Antûnîûs as-Suriânî.


LIMESTONE ROOF
SANDSTONE BODY
Light Shaft
Bed
Kitchen
Standing Place for Prayers
Library Shelf (18 books)
1.70 m height
Alcove
For books
& Keys
Mat
Table
Height of Tunnel : 1.00 m
Door
Sitting Place or Mastaba

Cave of Abûnâ Antûnîûs in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn.


N
S
North-window
Seat
BED (length 1.90 m)
KITCHEN
Height
1.80 m
STAIRS
1.30 m
MASTABA
Height
1.10 m
1.40 m
DOOR
ALCOVE FOR BOOKS
WATER JAR

Cave of Abûnâ Antûnîûs in the Wâdî al-Faregh,
11 km. south-east of Dair Anbâ Bishoî.

Antûnîûs' bed of sandstone. Furthermore, there is a little kitchen in the cave, where he prepares his meagre food.

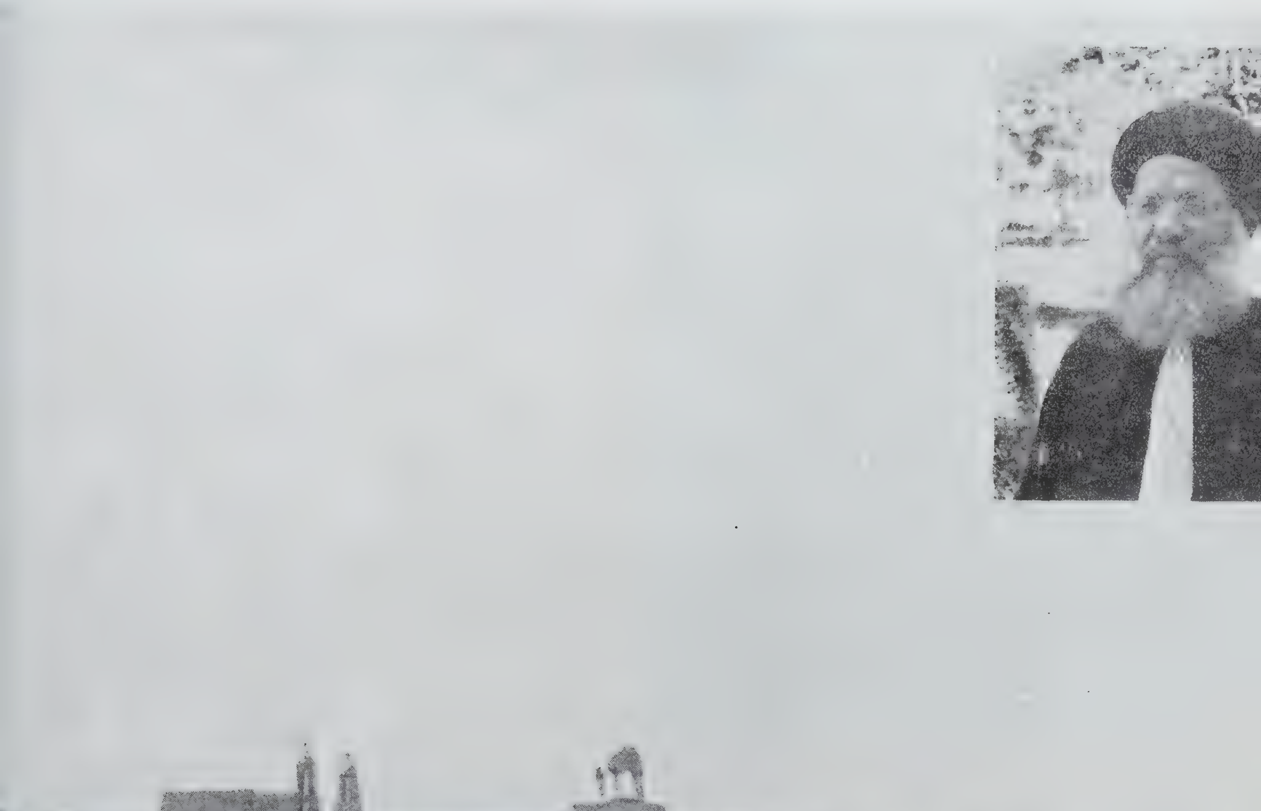
A few weeks after the coronation of Abûnâ Mînâ al-Muttawahad to the patriarchal throne, Abûnâ Antûnîûs became one of the three secretaries to the new patriarch. After a great deal of persuasion, the hermit left his cave to settle in the patriarchate in Cairo. After three months of city-life — though he never left his room — Abûnâ Antûnîûs returned to the solitude of the desert. Of all the Coptic monks in the middle of the 20th century, Abûnâ Antûnîûs appears to be the best informed and most learned one. Since April 1960, Abûnâ Antûnîûs inhabits an ancient cave, situated about 12 km. south-east of Dair Anbâ Bishoî. The cave is situated on a high hill overlooking the Desert of the Wâdî al-Faregh. That this cave was inhabited in ancient times is evident from an old pottery jar which Abûnâ Antûnîûs discovered when he rebuilt the entrance to his cave.

Patriarchal visit to Dair as-Surîân, January, 1959.
From left to right : Anbâ Ighnâtîûs Ya'qûb III, Patriarch of Antioch ;
Abûnâ Nûh (Noah), Abûnâ Maksîmûs as- Surîânî, and Abûnâ Samwîl as-Surîânî.

The agricultural affairs with special reference to the new farm and the plantation of the monastery were in the hands of the sub-hegoumenos, Abûnâ Mitîâs as-Surîânî. He lived in a cell built in the south-west corner of the plantation. Abûnâ Mitîâs is now the secretary of the patriarchate who is responsible for its internal affairs. Since 1959, the sub-hegoumenos is Abûnâ Makârîûs as-Surîânî, a well-educated monk who had served as teacher before entering the monastery.

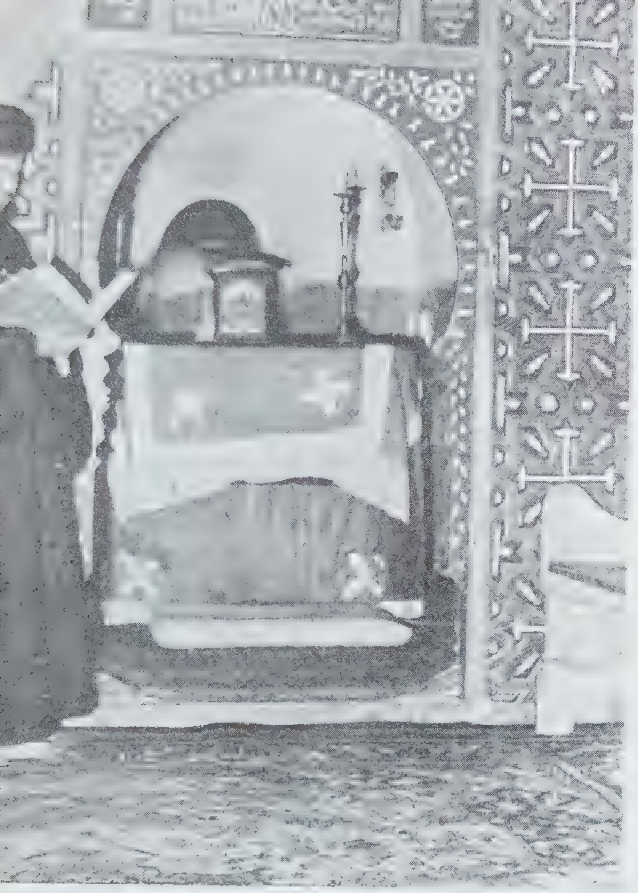
The international and ecumenical interests of the Monastery and the Coptic Church are represented by Abûnâ Makârî as-Surîânî, who received his Law Degree from the University of Cairo, a Degree in Arts from the American University at Cairo, and a Master's Degree from Princeton. From 1944-46, Abûnâ Makârî was a teacher in the Coptic Seminary at Addis Ababa. He represented the Coptic Church at the Second World Council of Churches General Assembly in Evanston, Ill. in 1954 as well as at numerous ecumenical meetings and conferences in Europe. At present he is on the staff of the Institute of Coptic Studies and among the directors of Christian Education of the Coptic Church. Next to the patriarch, one of the most important Copts, Abûnâ Makârî serves now as secretary to the patriarch. He is his personal adviser in ecclesiastical and political matters.

One of the encouraging features of the Syrian Monastery is that it is able to attract university graduates and other well educated Copts who have decided to enter the monastic life. Thus several young students and teachers have recently joined the Desert Fathers at Dair as-Surîân, and there is now every chance that there will ultimately be a revival of monastic life in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. This will certainly assume a coenobitic character, since the continual encroachment of the modern world into the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn is bound to render this locality less suitable for the eremitical life in caves or otherwise.

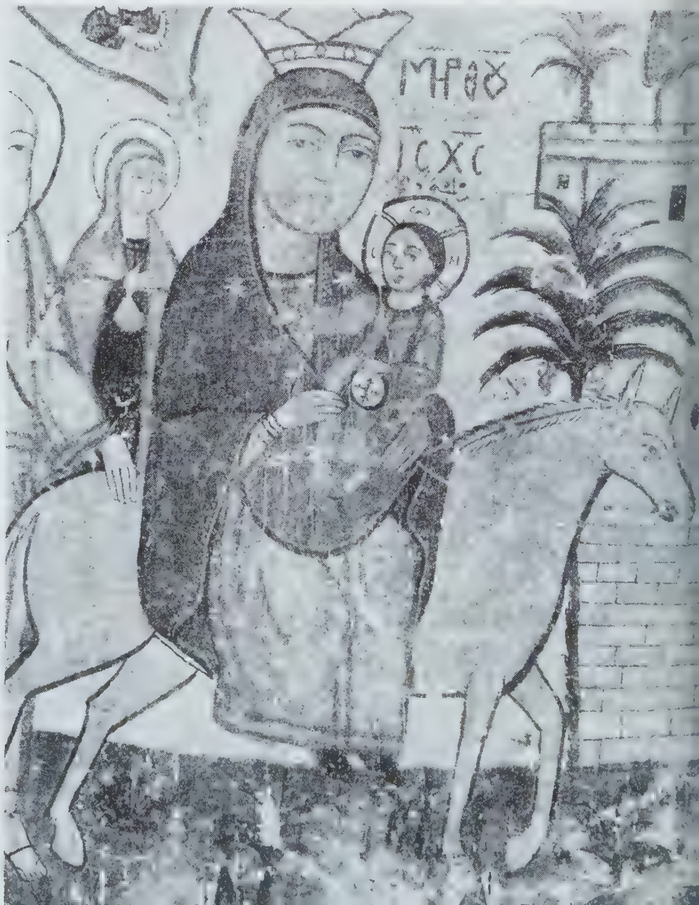


DAIR AL-MUHARRAQ

Exterior from the north-east. In the foreground the necropolis.
Inset: Anbâ Bakhûm II, Bishop of the monastery.

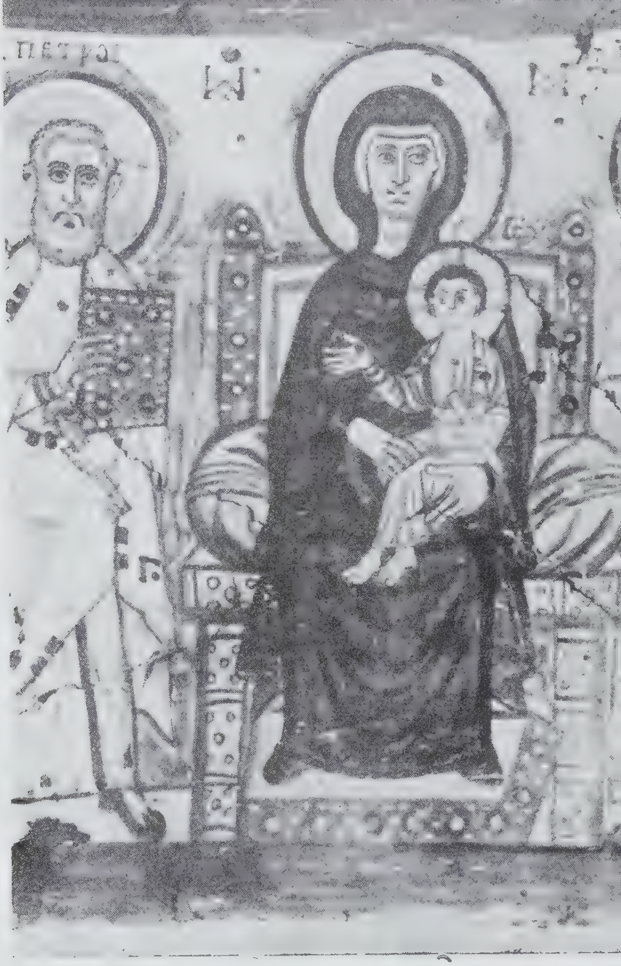


Church of the Virgin. Sanctuary screen and altar.



Journey of the Holy Family in Egypt. Virgin and Child Joseph and Salome.

The Blessed Virgin Mary.
Bawit, Fifth Century.



Coptic Museum, 71

Dair al-Muharraq

1. The Holy Family in Egypt

The history of the foundation of the Monastery of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Dair al-Muharraq) is closely interwoven with the story of the journey of the Holy Family to Egypt. In the second chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew [1] we read that, "when they (the wise men) were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 'Out of Egypt have I called my son'." [2]

---

(1) *Matthew* 2: 13-15.

(2) *Hosea* 11:1, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt."

After having left Palestine, The Holy Family together with Salome, the midwife, travelled in a south-westerly direction until they reached the fertile area of the Nile valley.[3]

They went via Tell al-Bastah, Bilbais, Samannûd, al-Matariyah, and Babylon to a site, on which is situated to-day the suburb of Ma'adî. Here they embarked on a boat and sailed to Upper Egypt until they reached the village of Qusqâm.[4] Near Qusqâm, Joseph built a small house of bricks and he covered it with palm-leaves, and the Holy Family stayed there for three years and six months and ten days.[5] This is the site of the Dair al-Muharraq. And when Herod was dead, the Angel of God appeared to Joseph and commanded him to return to Jerusalem.[6] And the Angel of the Lord said to Joseph: "Arise, take the child and his Mother, and depart into Israel." [7]

Then the Blessed Virgin Mary besought Christ to grant honour and esteem to this house, which gave shelter to them in their exile, and Christ blessed the house and said: "Let the benediction of My good Father remain in this house forever. This house which you see, O my holy mother, will have in it a sanctuary dedicated to God, and people will offer sacrifices and ex-votos in it to the Lord, and those who will offer them will be the faithful of the Orthodox faith till the day of my second coming.... And those who will come to this house with faith and worship, I will forgive all their sins, if they intend not to revert to them, and I will count them among the saints. If any of those who are in distress, trouble or loss come to this holy place and worship and pray in it, and demand congruous things, I will grant their requests and all their demands.... O Mary, this house in which we are will contain holy monks on whom no ruler of this world shall be able to inflict any injury, because it became a refuge to us. And any barren woman who beseeches me with a pure heart and remembers this house, I will give her sons. All the people who come to this place with ex-votos and offerings for your holy name, I will inscribe my

---

(3) In all Coptic-Arabic documents Salome is a cousin of the Virgin and often accompanies Mary and Jesus. She is with them at the burial of Elizabeth, it is she who brings to Mary the sad news of the crucifixion of Jesus, walks with her to Golgotha and follows her to the sepulchre.

(4) For a detailed account of the travels of the Holy Family in Egypt, *cf.* Meinardus, *In the Steps of the Holy Family*.

(5) "They stayed in a chamber in the upper story of this church, which is reached by mounting a flight of steps. In this chamber is a window which was opened in the wall by the breath of the Lord; it was not opened by the hand, nor by any tool." Abû Sâlih, *loc. cit.*

(6) *Ethiop. Synax.*, Sane 8, Budge IV, 978.

(7) *Matthew* 2: 20.

name on their offerings...."

After His Resurrection, Christ gathered His Apostles at Qusqâm in order to divide the nations of the world among His Disciples. On this occasion, He consecrated the house, and St. Gabriel and St. Michael carried the vessel containing the water which He sprinkled on the Church. The Blessed Virgin Mary, the twelve Apostles, St. Mary Magdalene and Salome were present at the consecration. And after the consecration, vestments were found along with the ritual used by the Church. And when everything was ready, Christ ordered St. Peter to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, and then the Holy Spirit came down. In that very moment a large bird flew from heaven and came down carrying with it all good things in matter of wines and delicacies. And it came down in the centre of the Church and everybody took from it.... This house became known as the first church in the world, the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Dair al-Muharraq.[8]

Two possible explanations have been put forward as to the origin of the name of this monastery. There are some who say that because the monastery is situated a distance from water most of the year, the land around it was called "al-maharraq" (burnt up), while others explain the name by referring to the grass which grew around the monastery and which could only be removed by burning (harîq).

2. The Founder of Coenobitic Monasticism

Historically speaking, the Dair al-Muharraq belongs to the group of monasteries established by Anbâ Bakhûm (Pachomius)[9] or his immediate successors. Its situation as well as the type of monastic life practised by the monks in it suggests a Pachomian origin.

Anbâ Bakhûm (Pachomius), who is commemorated by the Coptic Church on the 14th of Bashons, was born in the latter part of the third century in the nome of Sne.[10] The courageous witness of the martyrs of the Diocletian persecution influenced St. Pachomius' conversion to the Christian faith. Every Christian was compelled to perform military service and thus he was conscripted into the Roman Army. After his conversion he took refuge with a hermit named Anbâ Balamûn of Dendera. Anbâ Balamûn, apparently, was a leader of a group of ascetics and Anbâ Bakhûm shared his cell until finally he left the band of ascetics to found a community of his own at Tabennese, an abandoned village in the vicinity of Akhmîm. Here he was joined by

---

(8) *Cf. Synaxarium*, 6th of Hatûr.

(9) Pienkhemi.

(10) *Cf. Pachomiana, Commémoration du XVIème Centenaire de St. Pacôme l'Egyptien* (348-1948).

his brother John, who, however, preferred the life of a solitary and thus shortly afterwards left the community. After his initial foundation, Anbâ Bakhûm established several monasteries in Upper Egypt, all of which had something of a military character. The monks were gathered together according to the trades which they practised, and daily manual work was obligatory for all who were healthy and young. A superior was responsible for each house, and the hegoumenos had charge over the monastery. The students or novices were assigned to elders who were responsible for their spiritual growth. The divine office, which consisted of Vespers and Nocturns, was compulsory for all monks, and here we find the beginnings of an orderly devotional life. Joined to the life of prayer was the daily assignment of work. We find the monks working with the peasants in the field. This suggests that most of the novices were drawn from the peasant youths. More than once we read of the reluctance to admit persons whose upbringing had been of a more refined type.

Anbâ Bakhûm was a contemporary of St. Athanasius, the 20th Patriarch of Alexandria, who died in 373 A. D. We hear of a visit which the great theologian paid to Anbâ Bakhûm in Tabennese which must have taken place before 350, for Anbâ Bakhûm died about the time when St. Athanasius was restored to his See by the Emperor Constantius in 349.

The most important disciples of Anbâ Bakhûm were Anbâ Tawdrûs (Theodorus) of Tabennese who is commemorated on the 2nd of Bashons and Anbâ Ursiasiûs. Anbâ Tawdrûs was the son of Christian parents, and had joined at the age of fourteen Anbâ Bakhûm's institution at Tabennese. For many years he was the favourite disciple of the first organiser of Christian monasticism. At the age of thirty he was appointed hegoumenos of Tabennese, and Anbâ Bakhûm intended him to be his successor. It was the custom, however, for the candidates for higher offices to disclaim the proposed office. This Anbâ Tawdrûs neglected to do, and Anbâ Bakhûm decided to appoint Anbâ Butrûniûs as his successor, who, however, died shortly after his nomination. Thereupon, Anbâ Ursiasiûs was entrusted with the leadership of the Pachomian establishments. But Anbâ Ursiasiûs was not a very successful administrator and before long he was faced with serious difficulties. Later Anbâ Ursiasiûs prudently appointed Anbâ Tawdrûs who ruled the Pachomian monasteries for eighteen years, while adding new communities and restoring complete harmony among the monks. He died in 368 A. D. Having been for years Anbâ Bakhûm's most intimate friend, he was able to develop the life of the communities on his teacher's lines. After Anbâ Tawdrûs' death, Anbâ Ursiasiûs resumed control of the monasteries and continued quietly and efficiently the work of Anbâ Tawdrûs.[11]

On the 20th of Kihak, the *Coptic Synaxarium* commemorates the martyrdom of Anbâ Hâlyâs (Elias), Bishop of the Dair al-Muharraq. According to the tradition, Anbâ Hâlyâs confessed his Christian faith for which he was beheaded by Arian the Governor. His relics were hidden until the end of the persecutions, when they were taken to the church in the Dair al-Muharraq.[12]

3. Several Hundred Years of Silence

At the end of the fourth century, the 23rd Patriarch of Alexandria, Anbâ Tawfîlus (Theophilus) (384-412 A.D.) desired to build a large and beautiful church in commemoration of the Holy Family's residence. Then the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to him in a dream and said: "The Holy Trinity desires that this part of the monastery should remain as it is, in order that people, in centuries to come, may see the humility which made us choose this poor abode. Therefore, make no alterations or improvements in it."

After reading the mass of tradition regarding the visit of the Holy Family it is clear why the Copts around the Dair al-Muharraq refer to the place as the "Second Jerusalem" or the "Second Mount of Olives."[13]

It is not easy to determine the origin and the date of these stories. There is some evidence that the traditions were the product of the 12th or the 13th century, for the locality of Qusqâm (al-Qûsîa) does not appear in any traditions prior to the above mentioned date. Furthermore, this place became famous through a homily of Theophilus of Alexandria. As Monneret de Villard points out, the existence of an Arabic version of the tradition not necessarily proves an ancient date, for we know of no Greek or Coptic version prior to the Arabic one. Is it perhaps possible that a local legend, or legends were purposely created to attract pilgrims and to use their offerings and gifts for a special building program?

The same author is quite suggestive when he states that either the reconstruction of the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Dair al-Muharraq connected with certain miracles occurring at the same time

---

(11) *Patr. Orient.*, XVI, 381-384, 350-351.

(12) Synax., *Patr. Orient.*, III, 491-494.

(13) Strothmann, *Die Koptische Kirche in der Neuzeit*, 128.

were the cause of the legend, or else the legends arose around the pre-existing sanctuary and thus supplied the financial means for the rebuilding of the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary. And since there is some architectural evidence to place the rebuilding of the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary into the 12th century, it would be logical, following the argument of Monneret de Villard, to assume a similar date for the stories of the Holy Family's travels.[14]

As to the history of this monastery, beyond what is said by Abû Sâlih and Maqrîzî, almost nothing is known. Johann Georg, who visited it in 1927, states that "über seine 1600 Jahre Geschichte vermag ich nichts zu sagen," [15] and he was much disappointed because he had no opportunity to indulge in his hobby of collecting ancient Coptic treasures. An explanation of the lack of historical data for this monastery was given to me by Qummus Quzmân Bishaî al-Muharraqî. "Our monastery has suffered not only from raids and sacks, but we have had our share of internal difficulties. Our forefathers were killed, and our records and books were burnt. Those books that survived the flames were carried away. We are poor as to our history and our tradition."

Of the one hundred and sixteen patriarchs who have sat on the Throne of St. Mark only four have come from the Dair al-Muharraq. These four are Anbâ Gabrîâl IV, the 86th Patriarch (1370-1378), Anbâ Mattâûs I, the 87th Patriarch (1378-1408), Anbâ Mattâûs II, the 90th Patriarch (1452-1465) and Anbâ Yûânnis XII, the 93th Patriarch (1480-1483).

For the first of these four patriarchs Renaudotius gives only the following remark : "Gabriel Archimandrita prius Monasterii Moharrak." [16]

The *Ethiopian Synaxarium* provides some details about the life of Anbâ Mattâûs I (1378-1408). He had been a monk at the Red Sea Monastery of St. Antony before going to Dair al-Muharraq. It was from the latter, however, that he was elected to be the 87th Patriarch of Alexandria. From the Monastery of St. Antony "he departed to Dabra Kueskuam, and he dwelt there, and he fought so strenuously that, at length, when he gazed upwards he could see our Lord Jesus Christ sitting on the right hand of his Father ; and when he looked downwards he saw Him in the abysses in great glory. When Anbâ

---

(14) Monneret de Villard, *Deyr el Muharraqah*, 27.

(15) Johann Georg, *Neue Streifzüge durch die Kirchen und Klöster Aegyptens*, 24.

(16) Renaudotius, *Historia Patriarcharum Alexandrinorum Jacobitarum*, 610.

Gabrîâl IV, the archbishop, died, they (the bishops and priests) appointed Abba Matthew to succeed him as archbishop against his will, and when he refused they set guards over him, and the following day all the bishops told him that they had seen a vision and that he was suitable for the office of archbishop. When Abba Matthew heard this, he knew that they would not let him go, and he took a razor secretly and drew it across his tongue and cut it off. And that night our Lady Mary came to him, and anointed his tongue with oil, and healed it, and it became as it was before he cut it. And they took him to the City of Alexandria, and when they enthroned him on the sixteenth day of the month of Nahuse.... a voice was heard from heaven saying, "He is worthy, He is worthy."[17]

Apart from the Ethiopian version we read that Anbâ Mattâûs was much concerned with the raising of the moral and spiritual standards of the monks at the Dair al-Muharraq and the Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs. His sermons lead us to believe that he was seriously engaged in some reform, though apparently his efforts were in vain.[18]

Both Abû Sâlih in the beginning of the 13th century and Maqrîzî in the middle of the 15th century make mention of the monastery. Yet their contributions to the history of the place are negligible indeed. Both of them testify to the pilgrimages to the Dair al-Muharraq. Abû Sâlih states : "Pilgrimages have been made by many multitudes from all districts to this church from ancient times, because it has been celebrated on account of signs and wonders and the healing of various diseases."[19] Maqrîzî lists Dair al-Muharraq as the forty-second monastery in his list of Coptic monasteries and he speaks of the great feast, known as the palm feast and Pentecost, which attracts a large crowd of people.[20]

The Dair al-Muharraq, or a church in the immediate vicinity of this monastery, was inhabited by Ethiopian monks from the 14th to the 16th century. During this period we hear of Ethiopian communities which were established along the pilgrimage route from Ethiopia to Jerusalem, and Qusqâm near the Dair al-Muharraq is specifically mentioned.[21] Brother Nicholas travelling from Ethiopia to Cairo in 1470 refers to the cities of "Mesia, Asue and Manfelout," and then going through Egypt to the Monastery of the Coptic Christians in ten days.

---

(17) *Ethiop. Synax.*, Ter 5, Budge II, 453.

(18) Graf, *Gesch. d. christl. arab. Lit.*, II, 455.

(19) Abû Sâlih, *op. cit.*, 227.

(20) Wüstenfeld, *Maqrizi's Geschichte der Copten*, 101.

(21) Cerulli, *Etiopi in Palestina*, II, 353.

From the said monastery there are small cities along the Nile to Cairo, where one comes after twenty days.[22]

Fr. Francesco Suriano writing in 1484 states: "Above Cairo, two days' journey on the Nile to the south, there is a Christian country and homeland called Manfluth, where there is a monastery of the Jacobites, who are called the Marachli, in that monastery there is a chapel where the Blessed Virgin dwelt with her Son and Joseph all the time they were in exile in Egypt.... In which place many and divers diseases are cured up to the present day, according to what men worthy of faith told me in Cairo." [23]

Protris and Charles-François d'Orleans refer only briefly to the monastery. In their *Relation du Voyage du Sayd, ou de la Thebaide* of 1668, they mention the Meherrak, which was inhabited by Abyssinians, and about which all the Christians relate the traditions that Christ and the Holy Family stayed there.[24]

In 1673, Johann Michael Wansleben travelled up the Nile, visiting the province of Manfalût and fifty-one other villages, thirty of which were situated in the vicinity of the river. There he counted twenty-one churches or monasteries. He further mentioned twelve monasteries which were close to the Nile. These included the Monastery of the al-Muharraq, and that of the Ethiopians, close to which was the Monastery of the Archangel Gabriel which is in Buh.[25] The connection of the monastery with the Ethiopians has always been a rather intimate one, for the Ethiopians refer to it as the Monastery of Qusqâm and in memory of this monastery they built a church in Ghondar which they called the Church of Kueskam. This church was built by the Emperor Iyasu II (1730-1755).[26] Another tradition relates that the Queen Mentwab (probably Queen Bersebah) visited Dair al-Muharraq and took some dust from the monastery which she placed under the altar of the Church of Kueskam in Ghondar.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, E. Jomard informs us that the Dair al-Muharraq was inhabited by twenty monks and two hundred other people. This is the only reference to this monastery in his monumental study of Egypt, *Description de l'Egypte*.[27] That the

---

(22) *Information from Brother Nicholas, a friar of San Michele, Murano given in writing,* in Crawford, *Ethiopian Itineraries 1400-1524,* 129.

(23) Francesco Suriano, *Treatise on the Holy Land,* 195.

(24) Protris and Charles-François d'Orleans, *op. cit.*, 3.

(25) Wansleben, *Nouvelle Relation en forme de Journal...,* 361.

(26) Budge, *History of Ethiopia,* I, 161, II, 459.

(27) Jomard, "Description des Antiquities de l'Heptanomide," IV, 301.

monastery had considerably decreased in influence is also attested by ‘Abd al-Masîh al-Mas‘udî. In the middle of the nineteenth century, during the days of Qummus ‘Abd al-Malak al-Hurî, Qummus ‘Abd al-Masîh al-Mas‘udî al-Kabîr ibn Girgis left the Dair al-Muharraq with a group of monks for the Monastery of al-Barâmûs. This first exodus of monks from the Dair al-Muharraq took place in 1857.[28]

The Dair al-Muharraq was left relatively free from any missionary efforts on the part of the Catholic Church. On the other hand, however, from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, we find the Protestant Church trying to influence the monks of the monastery. By 1865, the missionary work of the United Presbyterian Church of America at Asyût was so well established, that the missionaries could turn their attention to the monks of the Dair al-Muharraq. We read in the history of the said mission that "through the diffusion of religious knowledge from the Scriptures and other books, distributed and read, many came about the mission at Asyût, and a great movement among the monks in Dir el-Maharrak occurred, in which several of the monks proposed leaving the monastery and going to Asyût to study theology." [29]

The second exodus of monks from the Dair al-Muharraq to the Monastery of al-Barâmûs occurred in 1871, when Qummus Bûlus al-Gildawî ibn Ghobrîâl left the monastery with a group of young monks and students. Qummus Bûlus had been the hegoumenos of the monastery, but he was relieved of his post because he distributed too much of the property to the poor.[30]

In 1873, G. Rohlfs set out for his expedition to the Farafrah and Siwah Oases. The first place to be visited by Rohlfs and the members of his expedition was the Dair al-Muharraq, where they were ceremoniously welcomed and taken into the monastery in procession. The bells of the churches rang, speeches were made, and the guests were shown through the churches of the monastery. Before their departure, the monks offered them lamb, turkey, eggs, butter and honey.[31]

In 1883, Fr. Jullien, S.J., visited the Dair al-Muharraq which, at that time, was one of the seven inhabited Coptic monasteries. Fr. Jullien compares the monastery with the other monasteries and comes to the conclusion that it is the wealthiest and largest monastery

---

(28) ‘Abd al-Masîh Salîb al-Mas’udî al-Barâmûsî, *Tuhfat al-Sâ’ilin fi Dhikr Adyurat Ruhban al-Misriyîn*, 107.

(29) Watson, *The American Mission in Egypt*, 186.

(30) ‘Abd al-Masîh Salîb al-Mas’udî al-Barâmûsî, *op. cit.*, 110.

(31) Rohlfs, *Drei Monate in der libyschen Wüste*, 41-52, and Zittel, *Briefe aus der libyschen Wüste*, 23-26.

of all of them with the greatest number of monks. Fr. Jullien travelled by train to Nazalî al-Ganûb, and from there through the village of Qûsîa and then, turning to the south-east, he arrived at the monastery. Though the cells of the monastery could house three hundred monks, there were only eighty monks there, of which sixty were in priest's orders. The walls enclosed four hundred hectars of good land, and the monks were primarily engaged in the cultivation of the land. The hegoumenos who received Fr. Jullien and his company begged them to stay in one of his apartments. They were informed by the hegoumenos that the Dair al-Muharraq was the most northern monastery of those established by Anbâ Bakhûm, and that it marked the northern border of that magnificient series of monasteries, and that for this reason it was called "Mukharrar", the border, which was later corrupted into Muharraq.[32]

Butler states that the monastery contained in 1885 a population of one thousand one hundred inhabitants, consisting of monks, peasants and Bedouins.[33] In 1888, Wilbour referred very briefly to the "Dair el-Maharag." "In this Dair, the sore-eyed boy who was my donkey boy's boy, told me, live 500 Christians, who have 2,000 acres and more."[34]

One of the first travel guides to refer to the Dair al-Muharraq is the 1928 edition of Baedeker's *Aegypten und der Sudan*. Here the author mentions that the monastery can be easily reached from Nazalî Ganûb.[35]

In 1907, Hafiz Naguib,[36] known also as the "Honest Thief", chose to enter the monastic life, though never baptized. Coming from Cairo, using the Christian name of Ghali Girgis, he went via Kafr Dâûd to the Dair Abû Maqâr, from where, however, he departed after a short time because of the high salinity of the water. At Dair Anbâ Bishoî he was made a monk, and was known as Abûnâ Ghobrîâl Ibrahîm. In memory of his friend, Mustafa Kamil (1874-1908), Leader of the Nationalist Party, Hafiz wrote a poem which was discovered by Qummus Butrus,

---

(32) Jullien, *L'Egypte Bibliques et Chrétiens*, 249-250.

(33) Butler in Abû Sâlih, *op. cit.*, 224 n.

(34) Wilbour, *Travels in Egypt*, 480.

(35) Baedeker, *op. cit.*, 217.

(36) Hafiz Naguib, (1878-1946), a Muslim *alias* Ghali Girgis, Mabrûk, Baron de Schneider, Abûnâ Ghabrîâl Ibrahîm, Abûnâ Fîlûthâûs. He was educated at the Military Academy, Cairo, and the Academy for Military Engineers in Paris. He served as a French spy in Germany. Caught and imprisoned in Germany, he escaped and returned to France and then to Cairo. Lived the life of a *bon-vivant*, accused of stealing, several times imprisoned and escaped. *Cf. I'iterafat*, Cairo, Dar al-Nil, 1946.

the hegoumenos of the monastery. The poem was published, and the "monk" strongly criticized by the Patriarch for his interest in a political leader.

On account of misunderstandings, Qummus Butrus advised his "monk" to enter the Dair al-Muharraq. Again, under the name of Ghali Girgis, Hafiz went to the Dair al-Muharraq where he was given the name of Abûnâ Fîlûthâûs al-Muharraqî. Because of his superior knowledge he was appointed as teacher in history, arithmetic and reading and writing. Among other things, Hafiz is remembered for his impressive lecture : *The Fundamentals of the Christian Religion and the Philosophy of the French Revolution*, which he delivered at the monastery on the occasion of the visit of Mustafa Bey Helmî. After a while, Hafiz became well known in the monastery and its vicinity because of his piety, learning, and his so-called miraculous powers. But his relationship with his former friend, Qummus Sidârûs, deteriorated as time went on, and Hafiz left the monastery. On his way to Cairo, he was kidnapped by some monks, but escaped. In Cairo, he met Anbâ Bakhûm, the Bishop of Dair al-Muharraq, who advised him to go to the Antonian Dependency at Bûsh, where Hafiz was much impressed by the more liberal attitudes of Anbâ Murqus. But his days in Bûsh were numbered. He was sent back to Cairo where he was introduced to Anbâ Kîrillus V, the Coptic Patriarch. After this experience Hafiz went to Minya where he took off his monastic habit.

There is no doubt that Hafiz Naguib was one of the most interesting persons in Egypt. His description of the monastic life as found in his auto-biography shows a considerable insight into the situation of Coptic monasticism at the beginning of the 20th century.

4. The Monastery in the 19th and 20th Century

That the monastery has played an important role in modern history is proved by the number of bishops who have come from the Dair al-Muharraq. There are at least five Coptic bishops, apart from Anbâ Bakhûm II, the bishop of the monastery, who, at one time, were monks in this monastery. These bishops are Anbâ Aghabîûs, Metropolitan of Sanabû and Dairût ; Anbâ Lûqâ, Metropolitan of Manfalût and Abnûb ; Anbâ Butrus, Bishop of Akhmîm and Saqultâ ; Anbâ Bakhûm, Metropolitan of Atbarâ, Umm-Durmân and Nubia, and Anbâ Antûnîûs, Bishop of Sûhag.

Furthermore, three of the candidates at the patriarchal election in 1959 were monks of the Dair al-Muharraq. Abûnâ Timûtâûs (Timotheus) 'Abd an-Nûr al-Muharraqî, Abûnâ Angelus al-Muharraqî and Abûnâ Damîân al-Muharraqî. All these candidates had parishes and administrative experience. Abûnâ Timûtâûs served for 12 years as parish priest in Dairût, while Abûnâ Damiân, now in Alexandria, ministered to churches in Minya. Abûnâ Angelus served as librarian of the Patriarchal Library in Cairo.

The list of popular saints whom the Dair al-Muharraq produced over the past centuries is too long to quote. At the same time, it would be wrong not to mention a few of these monks who have left their mark upon the history of the Church. One of the outstanding leaders of the Church in the nineteenth century was Anbâ Yuhannis the Bishop of Manûfiyah. The following story is told about him. Muhammad 'Alî al-Kabîr (1805-1848) had a daughter named Zuhra who, at one time, was extremely sick, suffering from a devil. The doctors who had been consulted were unable to do anything for her, and it was suggested that no one could help the daughter except the Coptic Patriarch. After being approached by Muhammad 'Alî, the Patriarch Butrus VII (1809-1852) remembered that he had a bishop, Anbâ Yuhannis, who had been given the power from the Holy Spirit to cure the sick. So the patriarch asked the bishop to go to Muhammad 'Alî's palace and to pray over his daughter. But the bishop said : "I cannot go." Then the patriarch insisted that the bishop should go, after having assured him of his prayerful assistance. The bishop went to Muhammad 'Alî's palace and prayed over his daughter, and in consequence the devil left her and she recovered. Then Muhammad 'Alî turned to the bishop and said : "What are you in need of for your troubles ?" — but the bishop replied : "I am not in need of anything." But Muhammad 'Alî insisted to repay the bishop for his trouble. Then the bishop said : "If you are really willing to give me what I ask, I beg of you that we may build our churches, as we please, and I beg of you that you treat our Christian sons equally in all positions of Government and public life." It is said that Muhammad 'Alî did show tolerance towards non-Muslims, for we hear that in spite of the prejudices of the people, he raised Christians to the rank of bey, which was unheard of amongst his predecessors.[37]

Another saint who is highly venerated by the monks of the monastery and the people is Anbâ Mîkhâil al-Buhairî. His numerous miracles have attracted the attention of many pilgrims, and an icon of him is seen in the most sacred place of the monastery, in the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary. His body is buried beneath the marble altar of the Church of St. George.

---

[37] Clot Bey, *Aperçu Général sur l'Egypte.*

The most popular of all the modern saints is, without doubt, Anbâ Abrâm of the Fayyûm. He had been a monk of Dair al-Muharraq for many years before he became the hegoumenos of the monastery in 1888, and it was due to his leadership qualities that the monastery received a new impetus. We are told that he memorized the Holy Scriptures in the same way as the Muslims memorize the Qurân. He laid stress on the responsibility of a Christian with regard to showing charity towards his neighbour, he admonished his fellow monks to continue and to grow in the ascetic life. His popular appeal, however, was due to the many miracles which he performed. He healed the sick irrespective of their economic status, and cast out devils where he met them.[38]

The following story is told by Mr. Ahmad Yunis of Timsahiya, al-Qûsîa province. His father and his mother had been married for many years, but they were without children, and so one day they went to see Anbâ Abrâm in the Fayyûm to consult him about their misfortune. Having prayed, Anbâ Abrâm promised the couple a boy within a year's time, and he asked that he should be called "Ahmad". After a year, a boy was born to the couple, and they called him "Ahmad". To this day, Mr. Ahmad Yunis, considers himself the son of Anbâ Abrâm.

One day, three Muslims decided to go to see Anbâ Abrâm. Knowing of his generosity, they wondered how they could profit thereby. So they decided that two of them should visit him, and tell him that their friend had died, and that they were in need of money to bury him. Anbâ Abrâm gave them the money. But when the two returned to their friend, they found that he had really died. Whereupon they returned the money to Anbâ Abrâm confessing their sins. But he merely said. "It is the will of God."

When Anbâ Abrâm died in June 1914 the Coptic Church lost one of its most dynamic personalities. That he is not forgotten is evident from the fact that his picture adorns the walls of all the monasteries, and many Coptic churches, and his name and miracles will be transmitted to the generations to come.

5. Some Recent Developments.

The headship of the Dair al-Muharraq has always required a great deal of administrative ability on the part of its hegoumenos or bishop.[39] The many social, economic and educational services rendered by the

---

(38) Strothmann, *op. cit.*, 118.

(39) Since 1947 the Coptic monasteries in Egypt are governed by a bishop. Prior to 1947 the head of the monastery was elected by monks and referred to as hegoumenos.

Tâdrûs 'As'ad al-Muharraqî

Anbâ Abrâm

monks of the monastery have been in turn expressions of a general policy advocated and instigated by the heads of the community. It might be useful, therefore, to present the names of the hegoumenoi and bishops of Dair al-Muharraq from the beginning of the 20th century.

1905 - 27	Bakhûm I
1928 -	Sidârûs Sa'd
1928 - 35	Tâdrûs 'As'ad
1935 - 37	Sidârûs Sa'd
1937 - 40	Danîâl Dâûd
1940 - 45	Aghâbîûs
1945 - 47	Athânâsîûs 'Awad
1947 -	Bakhûm II

On the other hand, no Coptic monastery has suffered so much from internal disturbances as the Dair al-Muharraq. The national and even the international press have reported from time to time the strained relations which have so often arisen between the monks and the hegoumenos of the Dair al-Muharraq. This happened in February, 1937, when, after the initial debates and quarrels the monks took action.[40] In protest against what they termed injustices on the part of their hegoumenos, the monks locked out the latter, and neither Church nor Government Officials were able to persuade the monks to receive back their hegoumenos, and, ultimately, they elected a new hegoumenos.

The past twenty years have seen at least five instances of internal disturbance at the Dair al-Muharraq. In 1936, 1937, December 1939 - August 1940, January 1947,[41] and April 1959. The cause of this being, in general, the dissatisfaction of the monks with their hegoumenos, and their determination to elect a new hegoumenos.

The Coptic writer Ibn al-'Assâl[42] calls the monks "angels walking on the earth!" This may have been true in the Ages of Faith, but the decline in religious fervour has not spared the monasteries, which resemble in many respects much more a human microcosm in which the virtues and the sins of man are clearly perceived. It would almost seem as if the high degree of individualization which is found in all

---

(40) Copts v. Police, *TIME*, March 15, 1937, 41.

(41) "Ma'a ruhban Dair al-Muharrak al-matrudîn," *Al-Ithnain*, March 10, 1947. In the disturbances of 1947, the patriarch intervened by exiling those monks, who had anything to do with the difficulties. A special committee was appointed to study the situation at the monastery.

(42) Ibn al-'Assâl wrote on Canon Law of the Coptic Church during the patriarchate of Anbâ Kîrillus III (1235-1243).

Coptic monasteries, resigns in the face of internal or external opposition. The communal spirit, which, it seems, was dormant, suddenly comes to the fore, and the monks band together in their demands for redress of abuses, and assert their rights.

At present there are seventy monks associated with the Dair al-Muharraq. About fifty monks live within the monastery walls and about twenty monks serve as parish priests in village and city churches throughout Egypt, though mainly in the Minya and Asyût provinces. Strothmann quoting "authentic numbers" speaks of forty monks living at Dair al-Muharraq,[43] and Johann Georg knows of seventy monks and twelve novices.[44]

Only three Ethiopian monks are still in the monastery.[45] This shows a definite and rapid decrease of Ethiopian participation in Egyptian monastic life. In 1955 there were still ten Ethiopians living at the monastery and Strothmann mentions that during the hegoumenship of Tâdrûs 'As'ad (1928-35) 25 per cent of the monks were Ethiopians.[46]

The statistics show that during the past twenty years at least there has been neither an increase nor a decrease in the number of the monks. Furthermore, there is little interchange of monks between the other Coptic monasteries and Dair al-Muharraq. I was told that within the past twenty years only one monk had come from Dair Anbâ Bûlâ and another one from Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs.

The affairs of the monastery have been conducted for the past decade by Anbâ Bakhûm II, who was born in 1900 in the village of Zarabî Abû Tîg near Asyût. As Abûnâ Shâhat, he entered the monastery at a young age. He gained his administrative experience as parish priest in Shubrâ, where he served the Church of St. George for six years. He has greatly furthered the social, economic and educational work of the monastery. One morning, I had the privilege of joining the bishop on one of his inspection tours to the new farm which is situated some seven kilometres north-east of the monastery. With great pride and satisfaction the bishop explained to me his special project which consists of gradually transforming the desert-land into fertile gardens.

One of the most delightful people of the monastery is Qummus Tâdrûs 'As'ad. He is the oldest monk in the monastery, and was

---

(43) Strothmann, *op. cit.*, 127.

(44) Johann Georg, *op. cit.*, 10.

(45) Abûnâ Zakharîâh al-Habashî, Abûnâ Banîâmîn al-Habashî, Abûnâ Gabra Selassi.

(46) Strothmann, *op. cit.*, 126.

born in 1883 in Rizqit ad-Dair. He was married before he entered the monastery, but after his wife died, he felt the call to join the monastic life. He was elected hegoumenos of the monastery in 1928, and served in this capacity until 1935. He is the spiritual father of over thirty monks, and thus he exerts a great deal of influence. In 1958, the monks re-elected him to be the sub-hegoumenos. He is well-known for the delightful manner in which he entertains his guests and for the genuine humour that is part of his personality.

6. The Buildings of the Monastery

Dair al-Muharraq can be conveniently divided into two main sections, the outer and the inner court. A large wall with an irregular outline, yet resembling roughly the shape of a trapezoid, encloses the monastery buildings. The dimensions of the monastery are 275 m. by 155 m.[47] In the inner court we clearly see the ancient and the modern part of the monastery. The ancient structures of the monastery, which are situated in the western part, have attracted the interest and the fascination of both architects and historians. Here we find the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the qasr and the small tower.

The Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary claims to be the oldest church in the world. We have already mentioned, that its history is intimately connected with the journey of the Holy Family to Egypt and with their visit to al-Qusqâm.[48] Abû Sâlih confirms this tradition, when he states that the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary is the first church which was built in Egypt.[49] The monks of the monastery naively informed me that the church was built immediately after St. Mark's arrival in Egypt, somewhere around 60 A.D.

Architectural evidence, however, demonstrates that the present edifice of the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary is to be assigned to the 12th or 13th century.[50] It is quite likely, that in the 12th or 13th century an older building was altered or rebuilt. Monneret de Villard mentions that the monastery underwent a general restoration in the 12th century, and it is quite possible that the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary was included in this programme of restoration.[51]

---

(47) Monneret de Villard, *op. cit.*, 4.

(48) *Cf.* pp. 286-287.

(49) Abû Sâlih, *op. cit.*, 226.

(50) Johann Georg places the church into the 12th century. *Cf.* Johann Georg, *op. cit.*, 24.

(51) Monneret de Villard observes that the structure of the church resembles that of several mosques. For further details on his arguments, Monneret de Villard, *op. cit.*, 20 f.

The unique altar-stone which is dated December 11th, 747 A.D. is of interest. This stone, having the shape of a stele bears certain inscriptions, which, however, have no connection with the historical development of the monastery or the church.[52]

The church is situated about 1.20 m. below the level of the inner court, and the reason for this, according to the tradition which is still preserved by the monks, is that "the haikal has been built on the site of the cave once inhabited by the Holy Family." To-day, the church is used daily for the Celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Since its renovation in 1935 by Qummus Tâdrûs 'As'ad, electric light has been installed in the Church and many prints, examples of contemporary Christian art, are attached to the otherwise very beautiful wooden haikal-screen. Of the twenty-six pictures in the church, 11 are prints which portray Christ, the Holy Family and Anbâ Abrâm of the Fayyûm. A very impressive oil painting of Anbâ Mîkhâîl al-Buhairî[53] hangs on the north wall of the church.

Above the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary there used to be the Church of SS. Peter and Paul.[54] This church, however, was taken down in the latter part of the nineteenth century, when the new Church of St. George was built. Part of the haikal screen of the old church can still be seen in the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

As in the case of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn monasteries, the Church of St. Michael is situated on the second story of the qasr, which is called by the monks of the Dair al-Muharraq, the "acropolis." Abû Sâlih again offers a reference that might be helpful. "Adjacent to the church is a large and ancient keep which had fallen into decay but which was renewed and restored to its original condition by the Shaîkh Abû Zakharî ibn Bû Nasr, the administrator of Ashmunain in the caliphate of Hâfiz."[55] This places the reconstruction of the qasr between the years 1130-1149. We know that al-Hâfiz[56] was very tolerant towards the Christians, that he used to visit the monasteries, and that he had friendly relations with the patriarch. There is good reason to believe, therefore, that the original qasr which dated from the eighth century, was rebuilt in the 12th century. The purpose of the qasr, of course,

---

(52) For a detailed description of the stone, Monneret de Villard, *op. cit.*, 8.

(53) Mîkhâîl al-Buhairî was born in 1847 in Akmîm, ordained priest in 1874 in Dair al-Muharraq and died in 1923.

(54) Here also was located the Church of St. Thecla, which was built by the Ethiopians to hold their services in their own language and tradition.

(55) Abû Sâlih, *op. cit.*, 227.

(56) Al-Hâfiz, the 11th Fatimid caliph was born in 1074 and ruled from 1130-1149.

was to provide shelter for the monks during an attack. The Church of St. Michael is said to have been built by Anbâ Ghabrîâl VII (1526-1569). St. Michael, being the angel of protection and assistance in times of need was naturally chosen as the Patron Saint of the churches in the keep.

The present Church of St. Michael, which was formerly used daily during sieges and attacks, is nowadays used only three times a year, on the feasts of the Archangel on November 8th, June 6th and July 6th. From 1948-1956 the Church was opened also during the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary in June, and Abûnâ Quzmân Bishaî used to relay by microphone the Divine Liturgy, prayers and psalms to the thousands of pilgrims outside the monastery walls. A truly laudable effort, and it is to be regretted indeed, that this service for the pilgrims has now been discontinued. The Church is decorated with icons of St. Michael, St. Paul the Theban, St. Basil the Great, and an icon of the Flight of the Holy Family into Egypt.

From the terrace-roof of the qasr one has a fine view over the monastery, the Churches of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. George, and the large necropolis which extends to the west of the monastery. The two small tombs on the roof were used when the monastery was attacked. An extension of the terrace of about 50 cm. beyond the wall served as latrine in times of attack. A slot in the floor served as a drain. A well, now being closed, provided sufficient water for the besieged. The entrance to the qasr[57] is by means of a drawbrige which connects the first floor of the building with a smaller tower.

The largest church of the monastery is the Church of St. George. It was built in 1888 by Qummus Salîb or as others say by Qummus Mîkhâîl Tegî (Ruwais). The building incorporates modern Byzantine features. The altar and the haikal screen are built of marble. The top of the marble screen is decorated with icons of the Twelve Apostles. Below those icons there are ten others representing from the south to the north, the Blessed Virgin Mary, Anbâ Bakhûm, St. George, St. John Chrysostom, St. Michael, the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Gabriel, St. Basil the Great, the Baptism of Jesus, St. Mark the Evangelist. Beneath the marble altar are the tombs of four monks who have contributed much to the glory of the monastery. The hegoumenos who built the church, Qummus Salîb, (died in 1905), Qummus Bakhûm I, the builder of the "Pachomian Castle" and the walls around the monastery (died in 1928), Anbâ Mîkhâîl al-Buhairî

---

(57) The dimensions of the qasr are: 16.50 m. high, the ground floor is 10.53 m. by 10.10 m. The terrace is 9.60 by 8.80 m.

who died in 1923 at the age of 76 and Anbâ Sâwîrûs (Severus), Bishop of Dairût and Sanabû (died in 1927).

South of the sanctuary is the baptistry, where during the annual pilgrimage of the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, up to five hundred children are baptized. It is this church which is at present used for the evening prayers. Also the services on the Feasts of the Nativity of our Lord, Epiphany, Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Easter are performed in the Church of St. George.

A new church which is to be dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary is now under construction. Its position is in the outer court of the monastery. Since women are not permitted to enter the inner court of the monastery, thousands of women visitors and pilgrims are annually deprived of attending the services of the church. The new church in the outer court will thus provide the women with a place of worship.

7. The Social and Educational Services of the Monastery

The Dair al-Muharraq is a unique monastic institution in many ways. Its location on the edge of the desert, yet still within the fertile Nile Valley has greatly influenced the neighbouring Coptic society. It is, therefore, not a desert monastery like those of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn or the Eastern Desert, and in many ways it resembles a large estate administered by the Church. The wealth of the monastery is evident to the visitor ; it is seen in the splendour of its modern buildings, the most notable being that called "the Pachomian Castle." [58] This building reveals all the elegance of the nineteenth century Levantine culture. Apart from six bed-rooms for guests with bath and running water, the "Castle" has its conference-rooms, sitting-rooms and a large dining-room, all of them comfortably furnished. The old library is housed on the ground floor, the episcopal suite is in the second story. The "Castle" stands in an idyllic orange-orchard which was planted in 1912. This wealth is the result of the administrative genius of its past and present hegoumenoi. In 1958, the annual income of the monastery amounted to nearly L.E. 40,000,[59] and it possessed 2728 feddans of landed property, part of which, however, was still unreclaimed. It was a truly interesting

---

(58) The "Pachomian Castle" was built in the first part of the twentieth century by Pachomius I, hegoumenos of the monastery from 1905-1928.

(59) Johann Georg mentions that in 1927 the annual income was L.E. 25,000. Johann Georg, *op. cit.*, 9.

experience to witness the process of reclaiming and cultivating this desert land and of transforming it into fertile gardens. The new farm extends over an area of 500 feddans. Four pumps distribute the water over this area, and the large wall which surrounds the farm prevents the desert from encroaching again on the recently cultivated land.

The Pachomian Castle

The administrative activities of the monastery are equalled by the interest in education which the monastery has developed during the past years. The Theological Seminary at Dair al-Muharraq was founded by Qummus Bakhûm I in 1905. The relatively new Seminary building which was completed in 1937, is situated in the outer court. The faculty comprises four teachers, and the students number twenty-one monks. The course of study extends over a period of five years and includes the following subjects : Theology, Old and New Testament in Arabic and Coptic, Old and New Testament Exegesis, Dogmatic Theology, Psalmody, and Coptic, Arabic and English. After completion of the Seminary Course, the monks are awarded a Diploma in Theology.

The Director of the Theological Seminary is Qummus Quzmân Bishaî al-Muharraqî, a charming and well educated person, full of humour and human understanding. His English is faultless, and his theological knowledge is most impressive. I had the good fortune of spending many hours with him in conversation on theological and other matters. Qummus Quzmân was born in Badarî, Asyût Province, in 1909. After having completed his Secondary School education, he joined the monastery in 1934. He has been Director of the Theological Seminary since 1938. Twice he was nominated as a candidate in the patriarchal elections, but on both occasions his name was struck out because he happened to be the son of a second wife of his father, which debars him from being raised to the episcopate.

In addition to the Theological Seminary, the monastery maintains at present a number of preparatory and primary schools in the immediate neighbourhood. Qummus Tawdrûs Ibrâhîm al-Muharraqî is in charge of six schools which are operated or assisted by the monastery. Thus, about one thousand children from the neighbouring villages are educated under the auspices of or with the cooperation of the monastery. These educational institutions are as follows: A Preparatory School in Rizqit ad-Dair al-Muharraq, about half a kilometre from the monastery; a Primary School in al-Manshiya, about 2 km. from the monastery; a Primary School in Saraqna, about 4 km. from the monastery; a Primary School in Ballût, about 1 km. from the monastery; a Primary School in Tataliya, about 10 km. from the monastery; and a Primary School in Rizqit ad-Dair al-Muharraq, almost adjoining the monastery. The schools at Rizqit, al-Manshiya and Saraqna have now been taken over by the Government, although they were built with monastic funds, and their upkeep and the teachers' salaries are still being paid by the monastery.

It appears that the monks of Dair al-Muharraq make more use of their library facilities than the monks of the other Coptic monasteries. The monastery has two libraries, the old and the new one. The old library, which is situated in a room on the main floor of the "Pachomian Castle", contains eleven cabinets of which seven are reserved for manuscripts, whilst the other four cabinets contain printed books. The manuscripts fall into the following categories: Biblica, Theologica, Canonica, Historica, Liturgica and Varia. The new library is located in a building south of the "Pachomian Castle" in the first story, and according to the catalogue it has 1989 volumes, most of which are written in Arabic. Only a few volumes are in English or in French. These, however, are very interesting as regards their subject matter. I noticed, for example, R.L. Stevenson's Dr. *Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* and the *New Arabian Nights*, Conan Doyle's *Modern Detective Stories,* Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar,* Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe,* Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield,* Homer's *Odyssey* and a number of English and French Grammars. The librarian is Qummus Lûqâ Kîriaqus al-Muharraqî who has his librarian's office in the new library.

Closely associated with the educational enterprise of the monastery is its social work. The monastery expends about one tenth, L.E. 4,000, of its annual income on the poor living in its vicinity. Upon recommendation by Qummus Tawdrûs Ibrâhîm or some other monk of the monastery, additional moneys are allocated for the needs of some five hundred people irrespective of their religious confession. Another L.E. 1,000 is distributed to individuals and Coptic welfare societies during the Feasts of the Nativity of Our Lord and Easter.

Arrival of the Pilgrims

It has already been pointed out that one of the main functions of the monastery is to serve as a centre for the annual pilgrimages. The fact that the monastery is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary attracts pilgrims for the various festivals in honour of her.[60] During

---

(60) The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the day of her entry into the Temple of Jerusalem, her Falling-Asleep, her Assumption, and the Consecration of the first Church dedicated to her at Philippi. One reason for the popularity of the pilgrimage to the Dair al-Muharraq is that Christ, through the mediation of the Blessed Virgin Mary assured Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria, that all those who would go to the Church of Mount Qusqam at Dair al-Muharraq would receive the absolution of all sins committed. A similar assurance Christ gave to St. Francis of Assisi in regard to the visit of the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Angels at Assisi.

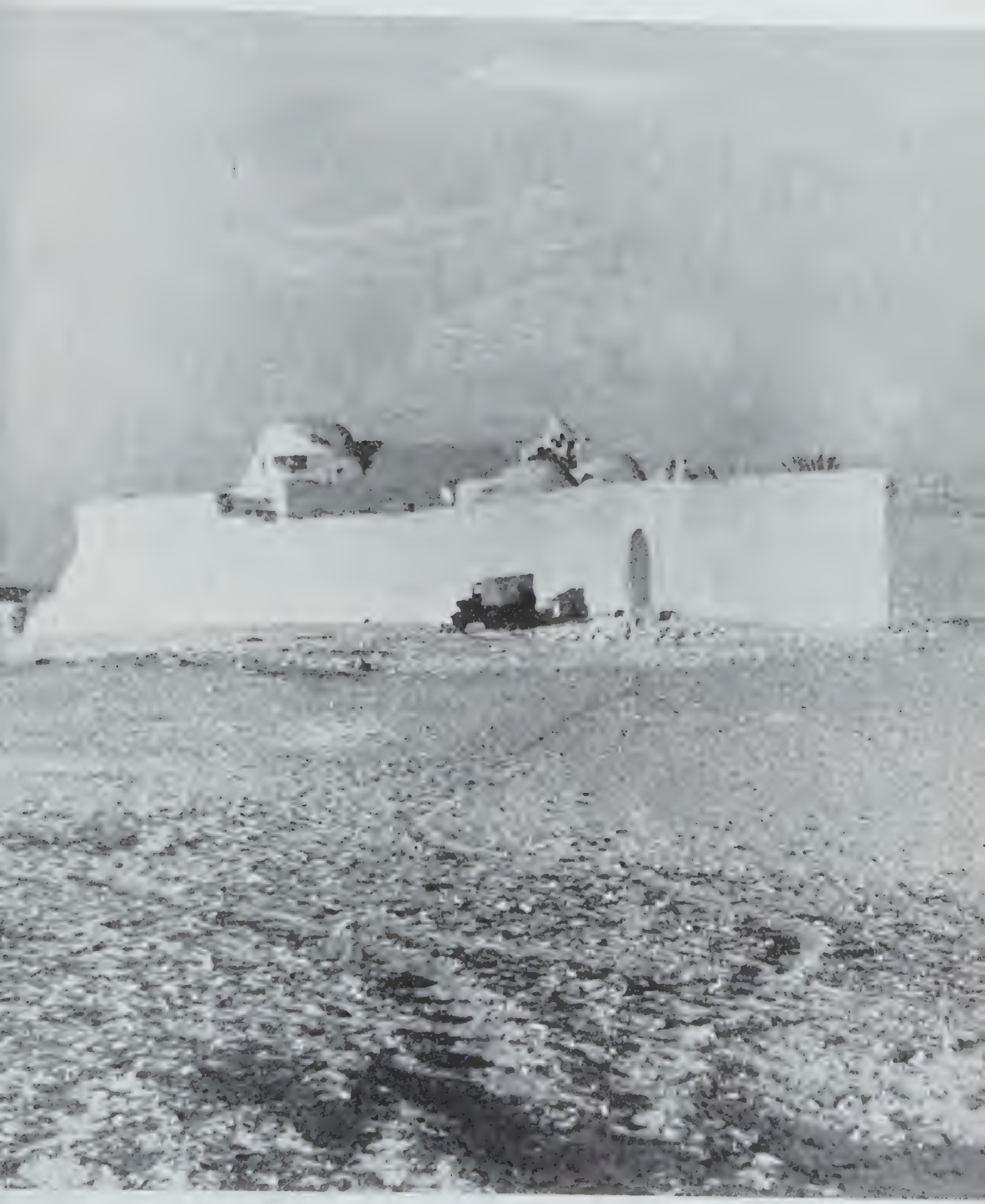
the week of June 21st - June 28th, 50,000 pilgrims journey annually to the monastery for the Feast of the Consecration of the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary. A fair with booths, games, side-shows, stores and other amusements and entertainments is set up outside the monastery walls. Special omnibuses, camels and donkeys transport the thousands of pilgrims to the monastery. It is difficult to describe the atmosphere of rejoicing and mourning, laughter and tears which is part of the pilgrimage. Thousands of pilgrims come to the monastery to visit the tombs of their ancestors who are buried in the large necropolis outside the monastery, whilst others consider the pilgrimage simply as a holiday in which everyone can participate.

At the time of the pilgrimage, the gates of the inner court of the monastery are locked, while tens of thousands of pilgrims establish themselves in the outer court and in the fields outside the walls. It goes without saying that the number of pilgrims remains unrecorded. Yet, it is interesting to note that only a few foreigners have ventured to the Dair al-Muharraq. The four visitors' books[61] from 1935-1958 that is for a period of 13 years, show that 21 Americans, one Belgian, 2 Canadians, 41 Englishmen, 6 Frenchmen, 3 Germans, 2 Italians, and one Maltese have visited the monastery. It should be understood, however, that not all visitors may have signed the visitors' book.

One of the main reasons for its relative isolation with regard to visits from foreigners is its location. To reach the Dair al-Muharraq from Cairo, one has to travel by train for six and a half hours south to al-Qûsîa (the old station of Nazalî al-Ganûb), about 65 km. north of Asyût. From al-Qûsîa one proceeds by taxi 14 km. in a south-westerly direction. The monastery is situated on the edge of the "green strip of the Nile." It is advisable to communicate with the bishop prior to one's intended visit. The monks are most hospitable, and visitors are welcome to stay in the elegant and comfortable guestrooms of the "Pachomian Castle."

---

(61) The four visitors' books extend over the following years: 1935 - 1943, 1943 - 1952, 1952 - 1958, 1958.

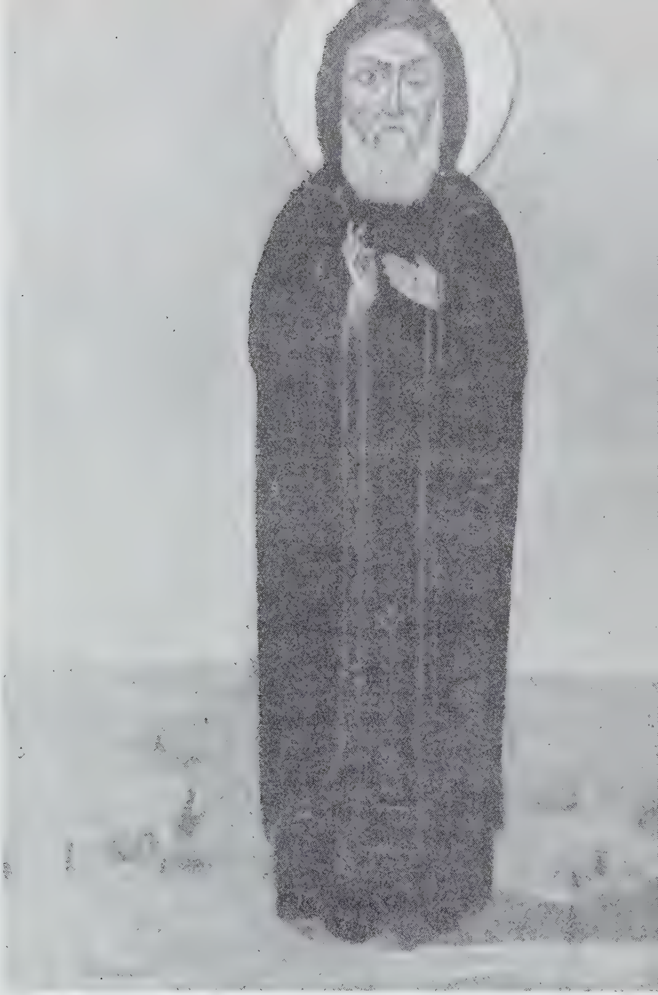


DAIR ANBA SAMWIL
North-east corner and east gate.

Church of the Virgin

Belfry

St. Samuel



Dair Anbâ Samwîl

1. Early Monasticism in the Fayyûm

The Monastery of St. Samuel (Dair Anbâ Samwîl) at al-Qalamûn belongs, historically speaking, to the Fayyûm monastery group. The Fayyûm is a large oasis about 85 km. south-west of Cairo with a long Christian tradition. Of the traditional monasteries of the Fayyûm, the Monastery of St. Samuel today is the only inhabited one.

There is justification for the assumption that the desert around the Fayyûm Oasis and especially the mountain of al-Qalamûm, was inhabited by anchorites as early as the end of the third century. This means that the rise of Coptic monasticism in its primitive anchoritic type may have occurred more or less simultaneously in the various regions of Egypt. The fourth century story of Panine and Panaw supports this suggestion.[1] The two young men, dissatisfied with

---

(1) The events in this story would, therefore, have occurred during the reign of Diocletian, 284 - 305 A.D.

conditions at home and school, decided to enter the desert life in order that they might grow in holiness. On their way, "they were met by the Archangel Michael, in clerical disguise, who guided them to the three Saints, Timothy, Theophilus, and Christodorus of the mountain of al-Qalamûn in the Fayyûm.[2] St. Athanasius mentions that St. Antony visited the regions of Arsinoë, the Fayyûm of to-day, or the Crocodilopolis of the days of Herodotus. When the need arose for him (St. Antony) to cross the canal of Arsinoë, to visit the brethren, he found the canal was full of crocodiles.[3] The *Synaxarium*[4] informs us that, after some twenty years of hermit life, St. Antony felt the need to go to the Fayyûm to encourage his brethren in the ascetic life. A last and rather significant reference comes from the pen of Anbâ Kîrillus[5] who in the 5th century wrote to a certain Calosiris II, Bishop of the Fayyûm, instructing him to read a letter to the monks of al-Qalamûn regarding the anthropomorphic heresy. It seems, therefore, that monasticism, both in its anchoritic and coenobitic form, began in the Fayyûm about the same time as it did in the Eastern Desert and in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. All three localities were far removed from the "world", and offered every possibility for the solitary life.

The earliest monastery in the Fayyûm region was that of Naqlûn, which was situated about 15 km. south of Madînat al-Fayyûm, the capital of the Oasis. Because the history of the Naqlûn monastery is so interwoven with that of the monastery at al-Qalamûn, mention must be made of its prior existence. That it was the most important monastery of the area is testified by the fact that both Abû Sâlih[6] and Maqrîzî[7] list the Monastery of Naqlûn first in their accounts of the Fayyûm. The close connection, perhaps even the friendly rivalry between the al-Qalamûn and Naqlûn monasteries, may have led eventually to the downfall of Naqlûn and the rise of al-Qalamûn.[8]

2. From the 7th to the 17th Century

The Saint by whose name the present monastery is identified,

---

(2) Till, "Koptische Heiligen und Martyrerlegenden," 55-71.

(3) Meyer, *St. Athanasius: The Life of St. Anthony*, 33.

(4) Synax., *Patr. Orient.*, XI, 663.

(5) 24th Patriarch, 412 - 444 A.D. He participated in the discussions at the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus.

(6) Abû Sâlih, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and some neighbouring countries; attributed to Abû Sâlih, the Armenian*, 205.

(7) Wüstenfeld, *Maqrizi's Geschichte der Copten*, 99.

(8) "From about the middle of the 7th century on, the influence and the fame of the Monastery of al-Qalamûn begins first to approach and then to surpass that of Naqlûn." Abbott, *The Monasteries of the Fayyum*, 38.

lived in the seventh century. St. Samuel, therefore, was neither the father of the Fayyûm monasteries, nor the founder of a particular institution. He was the rebuilder of an old settlement that had been deserted during the Persian persecution of Cyrus[9] between 631 A.D. and 641 A.D.[10] As Abbot points out, St. Samuel's genius is shown in his talent for organization. By the end of the persecutions, the Saint of al-Qalamûn had gathered together a monastic community of 41 monks, fourteen of whom had come from the neighbouring monastery of Naqlûn, and by the time of his death the number had increased to 120 monks.[11]

The monastery was not destroyed before the middle of the 9th century. We hear of the calligrapher Zacharias of the Monastery of St. Samuel, who in 842 A.D. wrote certain Synaxary lections for the Monastery of St. Michael in the Desert.[12] During the patriarchate of Anbâ Shanûdah (859-860 A.D.), the Arabs are said to have devastated the monastery. "Among all the places which they pillaged was the monastery of Abû Shanûdah, and the monastery of al-Qalamûn in the Fayyûm, and the monastery of Anbâ Bakhûm (Pachomius).... They burnt the fortresses, and pillaged the provinces, and killed a multitude of the saintly monks who were in the monasteries, and they violated a multitude of the virgin nuns, and killed some of them with the sword."[13]

A story purported to be by Qummus Ishaq, the hegoumenos of the al-Qalamûn Monastery, relates how his disciple Misâîl and a number of wandering ascetics drove away the Arab invaders.[14]

An Ethiopian tradition reports a miracle said to have occurred at the Monastery of St. Samuel. In this monastery was a beautiful church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, on the west wall of which was a large, wonder-working icon of the Virgin. There lived in the monastery a holy man who had fixed in his heart the salutation of the Angel Gabriel unto our Holy Lady, and he neither rested by day nor by night from reciting salutations. In the morning when the sun was rising, he ate a few herbs and beans, and everyone who spoke with him, thought him to be mad. He ate nothing from that time until

---

(9) Cyrus, Bishop of Phasis in the Caucasus was appointed Archbishop of Alexandria by Heraclius.

(10) For the persecution of the Copts by Cyrus, *cf.* Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt*, 168-193.

(11) Abbott, *op. cit.*, 39.

(12) Peterson, "The Paragraph Mark in Coptic Illuminated Ornament" in *Studies in Art and Literature for Bella da Costa Greene*, 310-2.

(13) *Hist. Patr.*, II, I, 45-46.

(14) Synax., *Patr. Orient.*, III, 443-448.

the same hour of the next morning. Furthermore, this monk did not receive the Holy Mysteries, except on three days in each year, Christmas, Epiphany and Easter. When the other monks saw him eating each day in the morning before the prayer of the third hour of the day, and knew nothing about his fasting, they imagined that he ate at the ordinary times of the day, and that he did not keep the ordinances of the monks. Then, on the day of the Festival of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the hegoumenos of the monastery, Abba Isaac, told the other monks to seize him and to bring him to the church and to keep guard over him. At his earnest request, however, the monks who carried him with rude violence, took him to the icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and he prostrated himself in adoration before her. Now when the Blessed Lady knew of the sincerity of her monk, and the contempt with which the other monks had treated him, she put into his heart the good thought that she would reveal herself to the other monks. Then the monk again addressed the Holy Virgin, asking her to deliver him from the monks, and after having cast his skull cap into the church, he offered his prayers. The wall in the church was rent asunder, and he passed outside quickly through the opening. When he had gone out, the wall closed again, except for a small opening that was large enough for a man to put his hand into. Now the other monks recognized the righteousness of this monk. The bishop and the archbishop hearing about it, asked to get the skull cap of the monk so that they might obtain a blessing therefrom, but the monks refused to send it to them. So the monks placed the skull cap in the store chest of the church. Later, the bishop removed the skull cap and went to the wall that had been rent asunder and he obtained a blessing from the opening that was left. Several times the bishop attempted to remove the skull cap, though each time in vain. Miraculously the skull cap returned to its place in the church.[15]

The story is, of course, the product of some monks of the Monastery of al-Qalamûn, though it is difficult to assign a date to it. We know, however, that Ethiopian monks inhabited the Egyptian monasteries from the early Middle Ages onwards. The story reflects a flourishing community such as is described in Abû Sâlih's account. *The History of the Patriarchs* records that during the patriarchate of Anbâ Mikhâîl (1092-1102), the Bishop of Cairo, Anbâ Sanhût, had fallen into disgrace. Anbâ Sanhût, a very saintly person and at one time deacon in the Dair Anbâ Bishoî, had demanded from the patriarch

---

(15) Budge, *The Miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary, etc.*, 75-83.

the return of some written promises and documents which the patriarch later denied having written. The patriarch, realizing that he was in danger of being caught by the bishop, threatened him with excommunication. When Anbâ Sanhût learned of this, he concealed himself from the patriarch, and went to the Monastery of al-Qalamûn, and the See of Cairo remained abandoned until the people of Cairo persuaded the patriarch to rehabilitate their spiritual leader.[16]

Abû Sâlih (1173-1208), moreover, supplies us with a more detailed picture of the monastery in his days. He refers to the walls, the flourishing gardens, the twelve churches, the four large towers, and a high outlook from which approaching visitors could be seen and thus prepared for. "The sentinel strikes the wooden gong in different manners, according to the rank of the visitors, so that monks may know, when they hear it, who it is that is approaching."[17] At that time the monastery was inhabited by 130 monks.

That the monastery was one of the more important ecclesiastical institutions in Egypt is also evident from the fact that the famous Arab encyclopaedist Yaqût ar-Rumî (1179-1229) mentions it in his Geographical Dictionary which he completed in 1224. "Dair al-Kalamoun in the land of Egypt and in the land of the Fayyûm is famous to the people and well-known."[18]

During this period the monastery must have experienced its best days. It occurred in the beginning of the 15th century that a monk of the Monastery of al-Qalamûn was elected to the patriarchate, and he was Anbâ Ghabrîâl V (1409-1428). To this day, he is the only one who ascended the patriarchal chair from the Monastery of St. Samuel.[19] Al-Maqrîzî in 1442 gives a less prosperous account of the monastery. It was, it seems, already on the decline. He still mentions the gardens and the walls surrounding the monastery, but instead of the four towers mentioned by Abû Sâlih, he notes two towers only. The following quotation is taken from al-Maqrîzî's description. "This monastery is situated in the plain of al-Qalamûn, from where the traveller can reach the Fayyûm.... The monastery has been given the name of St. Samuel who lived in the era between Jesus and Mohammad, and who died on the eighth of Kihak. There are many palms within the monastery that produce the Odschwe fruit; here also

---

(16) *Hist. Patr.*, II, III, 387.

(17) Abû Sâlih, *op. cit.*, 207.

(18) Wüstenfeld, *Yacut's Geographisches Wörterbuch*, II, 687.

(19) Anbâ Kîrillus VI, the 116th Patriarch served as hegoumenos of St. Samuel's though he identifies himself with the Monastery of al-Barâmûs.

is the Lebach tree[20] which is found only in this vicinity.... This monastery has two qasrs built of stone, both being large, high and white. There is also a spring within and a spring outside the monastery. The valley contains many ancient places of prayer. Outside the monastery is a salt work, the salt of which is sold by the monastery. The income of this takes care of the needs of the whole region."[21]

In his book *Mémoires Géographiques et Historiques sur l'Egypte* (1811), Quatremère refers to the Monastery of al-Qalamûn de l'Arsinoite, which as its surname indicates, is situated in the nome of Arsinoë, and which still exists to-day under the same name. Quatremère then continues his account by quoting the observations of al-Maqrîzî.[22]

3. The 19th and 20th century travellers

It is difficult to determine the exact date when the monastery was abandoned by the monks. Ahmad Fakhry feels justified in suggesting that the monastery remained uninhabited for 300 years.[23] Thus the beginning of the 17th century would be a probable date when it was abandoned. At any rate, when Giovanni B. Belzoni passed through the region of the "Wadi el Moueleh" in 1819, the monastery was uninhabited. "In this place I found a very large Christian church and convent. Some of the paintings on the wall are very finely preserved, particularly the figures of the twelve apostles on the top of the niche, over an altar; the gold is still to be seen in several parts." [24]

When Frederic Cailliaud crossed the desert of the "Wadi Moeyl" in 1819, he noticed a wall and some other structures, which he considered to be of Roman origin. At this place, he also found some sweet water.[25] Though probably ruined and damaged, it is interesting to note the extent of the ancient buildings that could still be identified at the beginning of the 19th century.

Wilkinson travelling in 1832 from the "Fyoom to the little Oasis",

---

(20) It is interesting to notice that Wansleben made reference to the Lebach tree and associates it with Coptic history. "Entre autres est le Lebaca, dont les Histoires Coptes rapportent, qu'il adora notre Seigneur, lors qu'il arriva à Ischemunein." Wansleben, *Nouvelle Relation d'un voyage fait en Egypte en 1672 et 1673*, 96.

(21) Wüstenfeld, *op. cit.*, 100.

(22) Quatremère, *Mémoires Géographiques et Historiques sur l'Egypte*, I, 472.

(23) Fakhry, *The Monastery of Kalamoun*, 72. Shammas Nassif Fanus states that the monastery was inhabited until the 15th century. Fanus, *Tâbîkh al-Qiddîs al-'Azim al-Anbâ Samwil bî Dair al-Qalamûn*, 35.

(24) Belzoni, *Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries in Egypt and Nubia*, 433.

(25) Cailliaud, *Voyage à Méroé*, I, 33.

mentions, that "the first halt is at a valley called Wadee Raian or Ryan, abounding with palm trees and water.... about fifteen miles to the S.E. of the Wadee Ryan is the valley of Moileh (the name Moileh seems to indicate a spot of bad water) with a ruined convent or monastery, and a spring of salt water. It may be visited on the way to Wadee Ryan, by making a small detour, and is curious as a Christian ruin. It contains two churches, one of stone, the other of brick, and is surrounded by a strong wall, with a tower of defense on the north side. In the churches are several Coptic and Arabic inscriptions, and figures of the apostles and saints, and the cornice that runs around a niche in the stone church is richly carved, though in bad taste. The total dimensions of the convent are 89 paces by 65." [26]

Almost half a century later, in 1886, Georg August Schweinfurth [27] travelled to the depression of the Fayyûm, and visited the still uninhabited monastery. He notices the potsherds that were scattered around the building, and he makes mention of the two Corinthian capitals. In addition, he measured the ruins. This is important information, indeed, for it gives us the extent of the ancient monastery. According to his findings the measurements were 55 by 67 metres. In the same year, Cope Whitehouse noticed in the Wadi Muellah ruins of ancient buildings, and a fair amount of coarse vegetation near them.[28]

Wansleben, Pococke, and Curzon, whose descriptions are so helpful in our studies of the other desert monasteries, do not so much as even mention this monastery. Beadnell writing in *The Topography and Geology of the Fayum Province of Egypt* in 1899, gives the first report of signs of a recent revival of the monastery. "Close to the north-end of the valley, and about 33 km. from al-Qâyât, lie the ruins known as Dair el Galamoun bil Muela. At the time of our visit a new square stone building was in course of erection and five or six persons were inhabiting the place. There are several small palms scattered about to the south of the monastery and an excellent running spring of clear water 500 paces to the south-west. A new well is being sunk within the premises." [29] Smolenski visited the monastery in 1908 and speaks of limestone and marble columns, and of beautiful capitals and the remains of walls, all of which are reminders of a more glorious past.[30]

---

(26) Wilkinson, *Modern Egypt and Thebes*, II, 356.

(27) Schweinfurth, "Reise in das Depressionsgebiet im Umkreise des Fajum," 96f.

(28) Liernur and Moncrieff, *Notes on the Wady Rayan*, 13.

(29) Beadnell, *The Topography and Geology of the Fayyum Province of Egypt*, 20.

(30) Smolenski, "Le Couvent Copte de Saint Samuel à Galamoun," 204-207.

All that is seen to-day (1958) are three broken limestone columns, one of them, about 10 m. west of the present west wall, is 0.40 m. high and has a square base. The two others have Corinthian capitals and stand at present in front of the east gate of the monastery, both of them 1.25 m. high. These monuments, no doubt, are the remains of the churches prior to the 13th century.

At the time of Smolenski's visit, the feretory of St. Samuel must still have been hidden away somewhere, for we are told that he did not see the relics, and that his information as to their existence in the monastery was based solely upon the testimony of his servant.[31] To-day, the feretory stands at the north wall of the New Church. Somers Clarke [32] writing in 1912, mentions the monastery as being one of the eight monasteries left in Egypt.

In the 1928 edition of Baedeker's *Aegypten und der Sudan,* the author refers to the "Der Amba Samuil", though he does not give any additional information about the monastery.[33] Johann Georg, Duke of Saxony, intended to visit the monastery in 1928, but was prevented from carrying out his plan because of the unwillingness of his guides.[34]

Then, two years later in 1930, the Duke was able to realize his intention and he travelled to the monastery via the Fayyûm. In his *Neueste Streifzüge* he tells about his car trip. After having reached the al-Qalamûn mountains, he had to leave his car behind and walk the last few miles. The monks informed him that a certain hegoumenos and twenty monks who had been excommunicated by the Patriarch had settled here and established the monastery in 1897. After five years, however, the Patriarch pardoned them and most of the monks returned to Dair al-Barâmûs, the monastery of their origin. In 1930, the monastery was inhabited by 7 monks under the leadership of Abûnâ Ishaq. Furthermore, he mentions two monks stationed in Marzaga (I imagine this to be Maghâgha). Johann Georg felt that these monks were the poorest ones whom he had encountered. Apparently, he had the same difficulties with regard to taking photographs which I experienced. As he writes : "The hegoumenos considered it to be sinful

---

(31) *Ibid.*

(32) Clarke, *Christian Antiquities in the Nile Valley,* 192.

(33) Baedeker, *Aegypten und der Sudan,* LVII.

(34) Johann Georg, *Neue Streifzüge durch die Kirchen und Klöster Aegyptens,* 20. Johann Georg was informed by Monneret de Villard that the monastery was eight hours by camel south of Medînat al-Fayyûm. Johann Georg concludes a distance of 32 km. A conservative estimate of the distance, however, is 60 km., 55 km., as the crow flies.

to be photographed."[35] Strothmann writing in 1932 says that "Dair Samuil ist das dürftigste von allen (Klöstern) und amtlich kaum anerkannt."[36]

Also in 1932, H. Munier visited the monastery and gives a short description of its history. He refers to the crypt, and he comes to the conclusion that it looks more like a casemate or store-room than a place of worship, and says that its walls are void of any inscriptions or paintings.[37] When Ahmad Fakhry visited the monastery in 1942 and 1944, he found four monks living there. A photograph of the four monks appears among the plates. At that time, the head of the monastic community was "an Abyssinian Gommos Raphael." Also in the photograph was Abûnâ Tawdrûs who had spent 14 years in the monastery. Abûnâ Athânâsîûs and Abûnâ Mikhâîl were newcomers, who were not at the monastery in 1942.

About 15 years prior to his election in 1959 as the 116th patriarch, Anbâ Kîrillus VI was hegoumenos of the Monastery of al-Qalamûn. Abûnâ Mînâ al-Muttawahad, as he was known, used to visit the monastery monthly, when he stayed in his Church of Abû Mînâ on the outskirts of Old Cairo.

In the middle of September 1955, Fr. Gabriele Giamberardini travelled with six other visitors from Maghâgha to the Monastery of Anbâ Samwîl. The arrival of the guests was announced by the doorkeeper. Then they were welcomed by an aged blind monk who greeted them singing psalms, a gesture which provided an atmosphere of festivity and rejoicing. The monks assembled and formed a procession, and the guests were conducted to the guest-room in the first story of the keep, where a luncheon of local bread, beans and onions was served. After lunch, they visited the churches and the archaeological sites. They were offered numerous personal invitations to the respective cells of the monks. In the course of their visit, Fr. Gabriele met 13 monks. Abûnâ Murqus was in charge of the monastery, since Qummus Mînâ, the hegoumenos, was absent. Abûnâ Rafâîl al-Habashî was proud to mention to the visitors that he had spent 33 years in the mountains of al-Qalamûn, while Abûnâ Dimîân declared: "A year ago I was still in the Monastery of Anbâ Bûlâ where I organized and directed a campaign against the Patriarch Anbâ Yûsâb II, which was

---

(35) Johann Georg, *Neueste Streifzüge durch die Kirchen und Klöster Aegyptens,* 12-15.

(36) Strothmann, *Die Koptische Kirche in der Neuzeit,* 126.

(37) Azadian, Hug, Munier, "Notes sur le Oudy Mouelleh," 50 ff. quoted by Fakhry, *op. cit.,* 76.

successful. To-day he is at the Dair al-Muharraq." Abûnâ Bûlûs, the aged, for he was over 100 years old, made an effort to come out of his cell to greet them.

Fr. Gabriele was informed by the monks that the monastery was reinhabited in the last years of the 19th century by a group of monks from the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, who had left the Monastery of al-Barâmûs on account of some difficulties. Under the protection of Anbâ Kîrillus V and Anbâ Abrâm of the Fayyûm, the monks were enabled to re-establish themselves in the once abandoned monastery.[38]

The monks told me, that after many years of desolation, the monastery was reinhabited in 1896 by Abûnâ Ishaq al-Barâmûsî and ten other monks who had come from the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn monasteries. In 1882, Abûnâ Ishaq al-Barâmûsî had entered the Monastery of al-Barâmûs. Dissatisfied with certain matters concerning the ascetic discipline in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, he gathered around himself several monks with whom he went to the mountain of al-Qalamûn, where he and his disciples reinhabited the ruined Monastery of St. Samuel. This was in 1898. The first thing Abûnâ Ishaq did was to build a new qasr upon the foundations of the old one. Furthermore, he built a church and a school in al-Zawara, a village in the Nile valley. Abûnâ Ishaq was well known as an excellent preacher and administrator, serving the needs of his monastery as well as those of the fellahin living in and around al-Zawara. Many miracles are associated with the ministry of Abûnâ Ishaq.

In 1911, Abûnâ Ibrâhîm as-Samwîlî, coming from the Fayyûm, joined the monastery as a young man 16 years of age. After the death of Abûnâ Ishaq in 1936, Abûnâ Ibrâhîm became the sub-hegoumenos of the monastery.

The remains of the ancient monastery mentioned by Abû Sâlih are still partly visible. The monastery must have covered an area of about twelve feddans of land which was enclosed by a thick wall, the foundations of which are still recognisable, north of the present monastery. North-west of the monastery, the old wall appears to have had a width of eight metres, and was probably once one of the qasrs which Abû Sâlih and al-Maqrîzî mention. The large amount of fragments of glass and broken pottery leads one to estimate that the number of monks who once inhabited the monastery was over 800. The two furnaces outside the monastery walls to the south must have been

---

(38) Giamberardini, "Il Convento dell'Anba Samu'il e i miracoli della Vergine," 140 f.

used for the manufacture of bricks and other articles. On the north-west side of the monastery the foundations of several cells can still be identified, though most of the territory is covered with debris.

I was interested in some 51 silver coins belonging to the late Fatimid[39] and Ayyubid[40] periods, which Abûnâ Mattâ as-Suriânî had found outside the west wall. This money may well have belonged to the monks, who had earned it by selling hand-woven baskets. At one time, many palm trees must have surrounded the monastery, since palm trees have been used for the construction of the Catacomb Church of St. Samuel. There is a tradition that tells us that the monks used to spend one third of their earnings on the poor outside the monastery, one third on the needs inside the monastery walls and one third on themselves. The existence of ancient coins, therefore, should not cause any surprise.[41]

4. The Location of the Monastery

The monastery is situated near the northern end of the Wâdî al-Mawâlih which is a continuation of the great depression comprising the Fayyûm Province and Wâdî al-Rayân. It is built near two springs in the Wâdî al-Mawâlih, 'Ain as-Samar and 'Ain al-Burdî.[42]

The Monastery of St. Samuel can be reached either from Maghâgha or the Fayyûm.

Travelling from Cairo 177 km. south along the main Nile Valley agricultural road, one reaches the town of Maghâgha. One then travels from Maghâgha in a north-westerly direction for 14 km. until one reaches the Bahr Yûsûf Canal at al-'Idûah. Here one can easily cross the Canal by car-ferry. From al-'Idûah, one still travels through the Nile Valley and passes through Banî Amîr, al-Qâyât and Tibinât, small villages that are in the immediate vicinity of the edge of the desert. The village mosque of al-Qâyût as well as the tomb of the Sheikh of al-Qâyât were built with stones taken from the remains of the old Monastery of St. Samuel; this must have occurred round about 1850. The village of Tibinât, I was told, is one of the very few villages inhabited by Arabs who until very recently (1938) practised the law of vendetta.[43] At Tibinât one enters the desert and travels in a north-westerly direction passing the Mount Abû Tartûr and from there in a

---

(39) The Fatimid period extended from 969 to 1171.

(40) The Ayyubid period extended from 1171 to 1250.

(41) The money may also represent earnings from the sale of salt.

(42) Fakhry, *op. cit.*, 63-65.

(43) A custom whereby the nearest kinsman of a murdered member of the family is obliged to avenge his death.

north-westerly direction passing east of the Mount of al-Harîth, until one sees the mountain range of al-Qalamûn. The monastery is located about 50 km. from Tibinât, east of the Wâdî al-Mawâlih. There are neither roads nor tracks beyond Tibinât, and it is essential to employ the services of a guide. While it is quite impossible to reach the monastery by an ordinary car, it is possible by a jeep, driven by an experienced driver.[44]

Most of the supplies for the monastery come from the Fayyûm; as one of the monks said: "There, the people are more willing to support our monastery." From the Fayyûm one travels south west to al-Gharaq as-Sultânî and from there one continues 32 km. in the same direction to the monastery. There are no tracks or roads beyond al-Gharaq as-Sultânî. This "road" seems to be preferred by the monks who do most of their travelling at night, following the stars.

The difficulties in reaching the monastery make Dair Anbâ Samwîl the most isolated monastery of those which are at present inhabited. That this was not always the case is seen from the comment of Abû Sâlih, who says: "This monastery is much visited."[45] The present state of isolation is clearly shown by the visitors' book of the monastery, which begins in 1948. It shows over a ten year period only two entries of non-Egyptian visitors. The monastery was visited on January 11th, 1951 by Sir Cyril Fox, at one time director of the Geological Survey of India, and by Mr. James N. Greenshields, his pilot, who landed at the monastery with a helicopter, a Hiller 360. In September 1955, St. Samuel's was visited by Fr. Gabriele Giamberardini.

5. The Monastery in the Middle of the 20th Century

To-day, the Monastery of St. Samuel has three churches: The Catacomb Church of St. Samuel, the New Church of St. Samuel and the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Catacomb Church, as the name indicates, is an underground sanctuary supposedly belonging to the fourth century.[46] Though this date appears to be most improbable, there is no question that the church belongs to the oldest part of the present monastery. The church which is situated in the qasr, is completely dark and has a vaulted ceiling. It is about 3 m. in length (east-west) and 6 m. in width (north-south). The stone haikal screen shows marks which indicate that once six icons decorated the church. Two steps lead up to the haikal, at the east end of which there stands a marble column, 1.25 m. high. This

---

(44) Ahmad Fakhry advises cars to be fitted with balloon tyres. Fakhry, *op. cit.*, 64.

(45) Abû Sâlih, *op. cit.*, 206.

(46) This date was given by Abûnâ Mînâ.

marble column, as well as those in front of the east gate, may well have belonged to the ancient Church of Anbâ Misâîl. It is very likely that the column in the Catacomb Church was transferred there by Abûnâ Ishaq at the beginning of the 20th century. A plaster covered area at the north end of the east wall of the haikal was evidently once a door. The monks informed me that this may have been the original entrance to the Catacomb.

At the time of the return of the monks, at the end of the 19th century, the Catacomb Church served at first as living quarters. This part was probably the best preserved section which may explain why Abûnâ Ishaq and his companions stayed in it.

Abûnâ Mattâ al-Maskîn still speaks about the Church of Anbâ Misâîl[47] which was situated in the north-west area of the monastery. In the latter part of the eighth century, Anbâ Misâîl entered the monastery at the early age of twelve. This was when Anbâ Ishaq was the hegoumenos of Dair Anbâ Samwîl. At that time, there was a severe famine, and a large number of soldiers were reported to have attacked the monastery, where it was believed that the monks had been hoarding grain. The object of the Government seems to have been to confiscate and distribute the supplies. As the soldiers approached the monastery, a rival band of warriors appeared and prevented the Government forces from entering. As it turned out, the leader of this group was none other than Anbâ Misâîl, who had enlisted the help of a number of anchorites living in the desert of al-Qalamûn. Anbâ Ishaq, in gratitude for the deliverance by Anbâ Misâîl, built a church in his honour.[48]

The New Church of St. Samuel is situated on the top story of the qasr. The church has one haikal and was built by Anbâ Ishaq about 1905, a few years after the reinhabitation of the monastery. The stone haikal screen is decorated with icons of Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary. Above the entrance to the haikal there is an icon of the Mystical Supper. Other icons in the church are those of St. Michael, St. George, the Ecce Homo, the Resurrection, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and St. Samuel. All those icons are of recent origin.

The two feretories standing at the north wall of the church contain the relics of Anbâ Samwîl and Anbâ Yustus. The larger wooden casket, (1.70 m.) encloses the remains of Anbâ Samwîl, while the smaller one (1.35 m.) belongs to Anbâ Yustus, a disciple of Anbâ

---

(47) The name "Misâîl" appears first in the *Song of the Three Holy Children, Daniel* 3:52-90, Septuagint Version.

(48) Synax., *Patr. Orient.*, III, 443-446. The day of the consecration of the Church of St. Misâîl is commemorated on the 13th of Kihak.

Samwîl, who is commemorated on the 10th of Tûbah. There is a tradition which says that the relics of St. George were concealed in the monastery during the days of the persecution.[49]

The Patron-Saint of the Monastery was born in 598 A.D. in the village of Pelkip and joined the ascetic life at a very early age, for we hear that at the age of twelve he was ordained sub-deacon. Against the will of his father he entered the monastery at al-Qalamûn, was ordained deacon at the age of eighteen and became a monk a few years later. He went to the monastic settlement in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, where under the care and supervision of Anbâ Agâthûn he learned the angelic life.[50] During his life-time the Coptic Christians underwent several severe persecutions by the Persians and the Byzantine authorities. Several times, St. Samuel took refuge in the Monastery of al-Qalamûn where he had commenced his monastic life. His theological activities, especially his keen opposition to the decrees of Chalcedon as expounded in the *Tome of Leo,* called forth violent opposition from Cyrus. The patriarch-viceroy tried to impose the decrees of Chalcedon upon the monks, and he used all means available to him. St. Samuel was imprisoned and beaten, and after severe questioning, was about to be publicly flogged when the civic authorities saved his life. After this, he took refuge in a certain church, where he was seized and carried away by the Berbers. He escaped, but was recaptured by his enemies who tried to force him to worship the sun, which he refused.[51] Later on, he was tied to a young girl, and the two were left to guard the camels. But St. Samuel preserved his virginity. Set at liberty in return for the miraculous healing of his captor's wife, he returned to the al-Qalamûn valley, where he ended his days in peace. The Hermit of al-Qalamûn had lived fifty-seven years in his monastery and "his powers of spiritual and administrative leadership earned for him a place among the monastic stars of the first

---

(49) According to the *Synaxarium* (16th of Adîb) the relics of St. George arrived in Old Cairo during the patriarchate of Anbâ Ghabrîâl V (1409-1427). Qummus Murqus, hegoumenos of Dair Anbâ Samwîl received a vision in a dream in which St. George appeared to him. "Take my body from the woman who will bring it to you, and place it into my Church in Old Cairo." The following day, the woman came and told Murqus of the body of St. George which her son had brought from the Church of St. George in Palestine. Anbâ Ghabrîâl received the relics and took them to Old Cairo.

(50) The Monastery of Abû Maqâr has honored the Saint of Qalamûn by including him and Anbâ Misâîl among the wall paintings in the Chapel of the Wanderers or Hermits.

(51) Synax., *Patr. Orient.*, III, 443-448.

magnitude."[52]

The relics of St. Samuel were discovered by Anbâ Ishaq. They were hidden under the alabaster altar of the ancient Church of Anbâ Misâîl, where they lay in the trunk of a palm tree. The relics of Anbâ Samwîl and those of Anbâ Yustus were then removed and placed in the caskets which are now covered with an embroidered cloth. Many miracles are associated with the relics of the Saint, not only in connection with the monks, but also with the Bedouins and fellahin. As one of the monks said : "Anbâ Samwîl was the result of the prayers and supplications of his parents who had been childless for many years, so he is regarded by many people as the Patron-Saint of Fecundity, a specialist in removing the reproach of barren women." It is interesting to observe that the name "Samuel" is very common among the fellahin in and around Maghâgha.

The new Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary with its nine domes is still under construction. The architectural design of the church was made by the monks of the monastery, where three of them are young men with a B.Sc. degree in civil engineering. The work is being done by hired labourers from the Aswan region under the supervision of the monks. Two quarries, one about 1 km. north, the other about 1 km. west of the monastery, supply the stones for the building. That the Monastery used to have a church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary is evident from Abû Sâlih's remark ; "a spacious church named after the Lady, the Pure Virgin Mary, which was consecrated on the 14th of Hatûr."[53]

The monastery, which measures about 60 m. (east-west) by 50 m. (north-south), is enclosed by walls. These walls are between 5 m. and 7 m. in height and 0.75 m. to 1 m. thick : Two gates lead into the court of the monastery. At the northern end of the east wall is the gate which is primarily used by visitors. The gate at the northern end of the west wall leads to the well outside the monastery. This well, 300 m. to the southwest, supplies the drinking water which, in spite of its salty flavour, has a pleasant taste. The well within the monastery walls is used for irrigation and washing purposes. Sir Cyril S. Fox in his investigation of the geological aspects of the general area remarks that "the monks have sunk a well in the monastery and draw water from a depth of 8 m. to the water surface. They also informed me that fresh water may be found at a shallow depth in the low ground

---

(52) *Ethiop. Synax.*, Takhshash 8, Budge II, 339-344.

(53) Abû Sâlih, *op. cit.*, 206.

to the south-east of the monastery, whilst a digging in the low ground to the south-west, beyond the spring, would discover only brine." [54]

The qasr or keep is a two story building. As mentioned above, the Catacomb Church of St. Samuel is situated in the qasr. The first story is used for cells and storage rooms. Of the eight cells, five are inhabited. The small rooms 3.50 m. by 1.30 m. have vaulted ceilings with doors not larger than 1.60 m. by 0.60 m. The second story has the New Church of St. Samuel, two cells and two living rooms or guest rooms. The monastery does not have electric light.

On the eastern part of the north wall of the qasr there is an interesting stone with an ancient Coptic inscription, though hardly legible, and none of the monks was able to inform me as to the meaning of the inscription.

Ahmad Fakhry also noticed this stone which is part of an inscribed limestone Coptic stele placed by the monks over the entrance to the burial chamber of Abûnâ Ishaq.[55]

One cannot help but be impressed by the enthusiastic building activity under the leadership of Abûnâ Mattâ al-Mâskîn. Two new constructions of ten cells each are now being built on the north side of the monastery. Once the new Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary is completed, Abûnâ Mattâ's plan is to build a refectory at the east side of the monastery, south of the new church. It was good to see the old cells being pulled down, thus providing space for a new dining hall, an otherwise almost forgotten institution in Coptic monasticism. At present, one of the guest or living-rooms serves as refectory.[56]

6. The Monks of the Monastery

In 1958, the monastery was inhabited by 20 monks under the hegoumenship of Abûnâ Mînâ as-Samwîlî who lives in al-Zawara. Six of the monks at Dair Anbâ Samwîl were university graduates, and about 30% of the monks were under, or around 30 years of age.[57]

---

(54) Fox, *The Geological Aspects of the Wadi El Raiyan Project*, 25-28.

(55) Fakhry, *op. cit.*, 80. The stone has the remains of eight lines and measures 28 by 45 cm.

(56) Abûnâ Mattâ planned to build a guest-house abutting to the south wall of the monastery.

(57) The history of Coptic monasticism records that several monks and solitaries in the past possessed an academic education. St. Arsenius was the tutor to the two princes Arcadius and Honorius, the sons of Theodosius the Great (379-395 A.D.), before he entered the Desert of Scetis. St. Colluthus had studied philosophy and medicine. He abandoned his wealth and adopted the ascetic life in Antinoë, where he was finally martyred. At the end of the

Furthermore, this young band of monks showed an ascetic enthusiasm which, with the exception of that of the monks at the Monastery of the Syrians in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, is hardly reached anywhere else among the Coptic Desert Fathers.

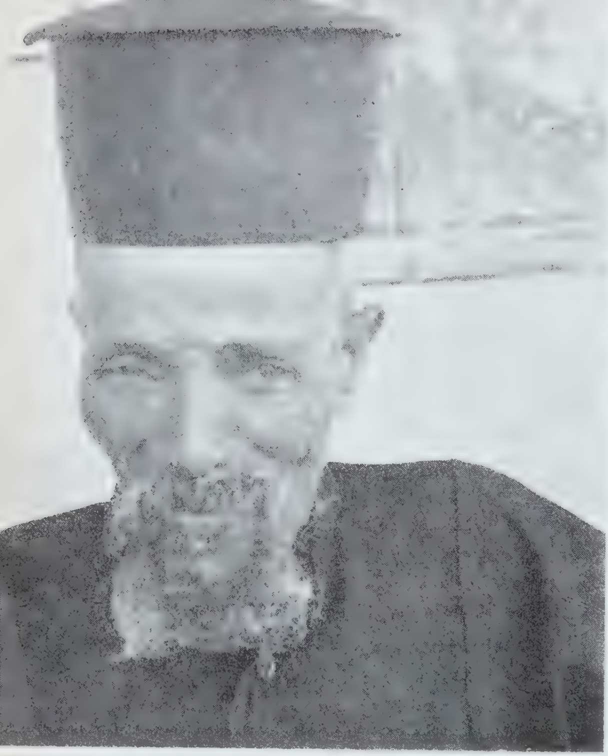
The *born hermit* and natural leader of the ascetes at Dair Anbâ Samwîl was Abûnâ Mattâ al-Maskîn, who is about 40 years of age. After having taken a B.Sc. degree in pharmacology, he worked as a pharmacist in his own business in Damanhûr. Then, following the call to the ascetic life, he sold his pharmacy and joined the Desert Fathers at Dair Anbâ Samwîl. After some time, he went to the Dair as-Surîân in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. But soon after, he decided to follow the great masters, and he left the walls of the monastery to withdraw into solitary life to the Hill of Sarâbâmûn, some 3 km. south-west of Dair as-Surîân. While there, following the ancient tradition of the anchorites, he would leave his cell once a week to receive the Holy Sacrament at the monastery, and to collect his food and water supply for another week of solitary life. For three years Abûnâ Mattâ lived in the wilderness of the Desert of Scetis. One of the reasons for his retreat to the cave was, no doubt, the comparatively easy accessibility of Dair as-Surîân to visitors and tourists. (It was this same disturbing experience that drove Anbâ Makârîûs from his cell to a cave half a stade, about 110 m. distant.) After leaving the cave at the Hill of Sarâbâmûn, he served as a Patriarchal Vicar in Alexandria. It was during this time, that, still a hermit at heart, he met students and teachers in the evening and discussed with them matters concerning religion and the true spiritual life.[58]

In 1956 Abûnâ Mattâ, having returned to the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, left the Monastery of the Syrians with a group of young monks, many of

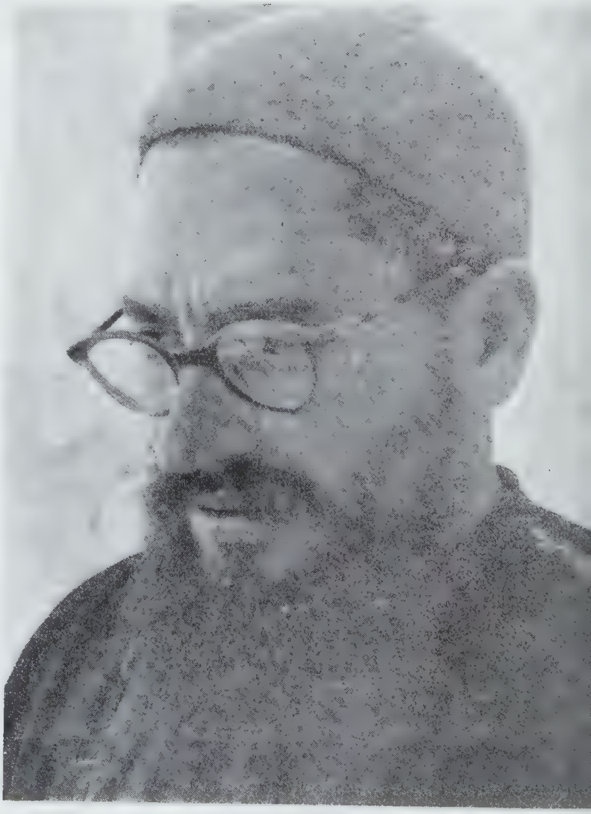
---

14th century, we learn of al-Makin Girgis ibn al-'Amîd, who was a physician, priest and hermit living in the Mountain of Tûrah. Among the University graduates at Dair Anbâ Samwîl and Dair as-Surîan are Abûnâ Aghâtun (Agathon), B.A. (Literature), Abûnâ Antûnîûs, B.A. (Education), Abûnâ Danîâl, B.Sc. (Engineering), Abûnâ Dîûnûsîûs (Dionysius), B.Sc. (Chemistry), Abûnâ Ish'îâ (Isaiah), B.Sc. (Engineering), Abûnâ Kîrillus, B.Sc. (Engineering), Abûnâ Mattâ, B.Sc. (Pharmacy), Abûnâ Makârî, B.A. (Education), B.A. (Law), B.D., M.R.E., Abûnâ Mîtîâs, B.A. (Agriculture), Abûnâ Mînâ, B.A. (Chemistry), Abûnâ Mûsâ, B.Sc. (Engineering), Abûnâ Shanûdah, B.A. (Education).

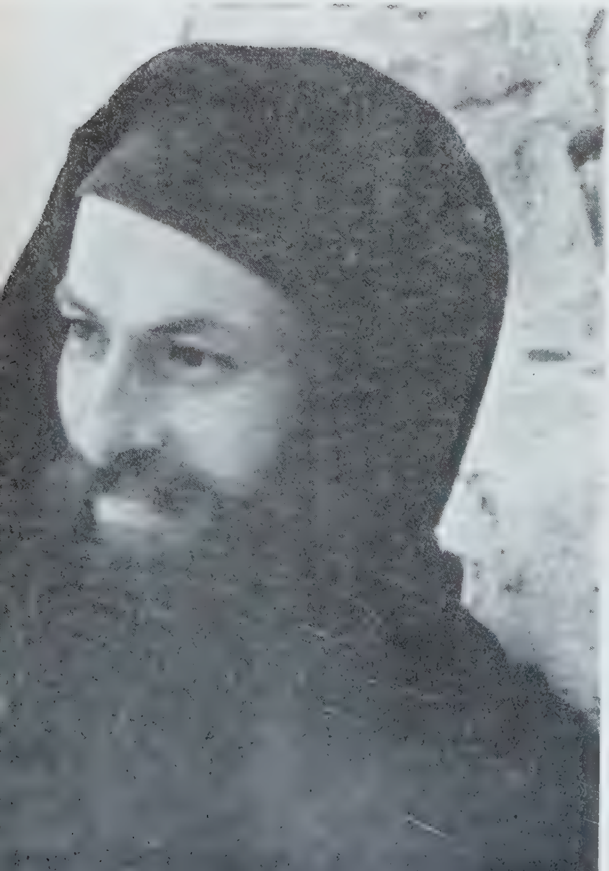
[58] In 1954, Abûnâ Mattâ wrote the *Hayât as-Salât al-Ûrthudhuksîah (Life of Orthodox Prayer)*, published at Dair as-Surîân. He has written several books on Orthodox Spirituality since.



Rafâ'îl al-Habashî



Mattâ al-Maskîn as-Surîânî



Kîrillus as-Surîânî

them university graduates, for the Desert of al-Qalamûn.[59] "Christianity can only be revived by a revivification of the genuine monastic ideal, which is the life and the teachings of our fathers... thus this monastery is the centre of those monks who want to lead a free ascetic life without a bishop according to the traditions of the church... we want to lead a life that enables us to follow in the steps of the fathers, and this one can hardly do any longer at Dair as-Surîân because of its closeness to the world... here we are poor, poor like our fathers, we have no library, yet our books are written in our minds to serve our minds... and religion, which is the life with God, the true philosophy comes from the heart to serve the heart, thus we don't need a library, our library is within us, our hearts contain the library of God... where the spirit is, books are superfluous, our ideal is that of our fathers, living with God and in God... yes, I am eager to live with my God alone and to die in a place which no one knows..."

Following the *ora et labora* principle of the true monastic tradition, one sees Abûnâ Mattâ working in the quarry, reading the lives of the Desert Fathers, counseling and praying with the monks. Of the eleven monks who joined him at the Dair as-Surîân, two returned to their original monastery, one of them being Abûnâ Antûnîûs as-Surîânî, who now serves as librarian of the Dair as-Surîân, but still continues the solitary life in one of the caves of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn.

The ascetic movement at Dair Anbâ Samwîl is a very significant

---

(59) Although, according to St. Basil's Rule, a monk was not permitted to leave his monastery in order to enter another, this rule did not prevail in Egypt, for we have evidence that monks sometimes changed their place of abode.

A story is related by Palladius of a certain brother who asked Abba Sisoes: "Father, how was it that thou didst leave Scete where thou wast with Abba Macarius, and didst come here?" And the old man said unto him: "When Scete began to be filled with monks, I heard that Abba Antonius had fallen asleep, and I came to the mountain here, and found that this place was quiet, and I lived here for a little time." The brother said unto him, "How long hast thou been here?" and the old man said, "Behold, I have been here seventy years this day." — Elias of the Fayyûm was an ascete of Samhûd, then he went to the Monastery of St. Pachomius which he left on account of dissension and strife among the monks. He went to Mount Shama where he remained for two years. From there, he went to Mount Haou, and finally by the guidance of an Angel, he was led to Mount Fardjut, where he founded Dair al-Qubr. — In the middle of 19th century some monks left the Dair al-Muharraq for the Monastery of al-Barâmûs; in 1898, some monks transferred from the Dair al-Barâmûs to the Dair Anbâ Samwîl. In 1954, a group of monks went from Dair as-Surîân to Dair Anbâ Samwîl. There is, however, no shifting of monks among the four Wâdî 'n-Natrûn monasteries. In October, 1960, Anbâ Kîrillus ordered all monks to return to their original monasteries. Those monks who disobeyed the order were suspended.

development within the Church, and its influence has been and will be far reaching. Several monks of the Monastery of St. Samuel have had training and experience in the solitary life in the caves of the Hill of Sarâbâmûn and elsewhere. There is Abûnâ Mînâ al-Muttawahad, who used to be the hegoumenos of the monastery, a man who has spent many years as an anchorite, and who has devoted his energies for the cause of the solitary movement. The Coptic Cross which decorates the guest-room of the monastery was made by him, and it serves as an inspiration for those who are now living within the walls of the monastery.

The services at Dair Anbâ Samwîl are conducted in the New Church of St. Samuel. The monastery bell rings at 4 a.m. calling the monks for the Canonical Hours, the Morning Offering of Incense. The Divine Liturgy begins about 7 a.m. Vespers and the Evening Offering of Incense is also performed in the New Church about 5 p.m. The Catacomb Church of St. Samuel is used only on the Feast of St. Samuel, the 8th of Kihak, yet the church is available for any services which the monks may wish to conduct.

I had the great privilege of attending the Divine Liturgy at the Dair Anbâ Samwîl, celebrated by Abûnâ Mûsâ, a young ascete, 28 years of age. Even the most indifferent onlooker would have experienced a feeling of other-worldliness as this young desert monk in an almost angelic manner celebrated the Divine Mysteries of the Liturgy. He used to be a civil engineer like Abûnâ Kîrillus and Abûnâ Ish'îâ (Isaiah) before entering Dair as-Surîân. He had left the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn because, like St. Antony, he felt that "as fish die if a man lift them out of the water, in like manner, if we monks prolong our stay with men, then our minds become perverted and troubled. Therefore, it is meet that even as fish pass their lives beneath the water, we, also, should let our lives and our works be buried in the wilderness."

Apart from Abûnâ Mattâ al-Maskîn, there were two other young monks who have led for several years the solitary life in the Nitrian Desert, Abûnâ Istafânûs (Stephen) and Abûnâ Mînâ, the latter a young graduate in chemistry. These monks spent their time in the caves of the Desert preparing themselves for a holy life, a life with and in God.

One of the youngest monks in Egypt is Abûnâ Dâûd as-Surîâni. He was 22 years of age when I met him, yet he radiated a spiritual maturity which can only have been the work of the Desert. Originally, he came from the Fayyûm. He attended secondary school in Cairo, and afterwards entered the Faculty of Arts at Cairo University. His parents wanted him to be a physician and so, following the parental wishes, he enrolled for one year in the Faculty of Medicine. However, in spite of himself, he was drawn to the study of theology and philosophy, and, instead of completing either his medicine or his arts courses, he enrolled at the Coptic Theological College in Cairo. It was there that he decided to enter the monastic life. His parents at first refused to allow this, because of his tender age, but Abûnâ Dâûd, pointing to the example of the Desert Fathers who had entered the Desert at an age much younger than his, finally overcame the opposition of his parents. "You, who are my parents, you have brought me up. I know you want me to be happy. Let me be happy, happy with God, with God in the Desert." Like all the other young hermits, he joined at first the Dair as-Surîân, where he stayed for one year only. Then he left for the Inner Desert at al-Qalamûn.

"Life at St. Samuel's is real ; you get to know yourself as you really are. You worship better there than anywhere else, and you feel as if you are back in the good days of our Church, in the fourth century. There you are with God. The world is so far away, over sixty kilometres to the nearest village, all by yourself with God. There I can study the spiritual life and prayer, for what is theology or philosophy but prayer and communion with God ? And for this you need quietness, the calmness which the desert gives you." In 1959, Abûnâ Dâûd received his B.D. degree from the Coptic Theological College. At present Abûnâ Dâûd is at Dair as-Surîân.

The oldest monk of the monastery is Abûnâ Bûlûs as-Samwîlî, white-bearded veteran, 108 years of age. He spends almost all of his time in his cell. He is the only monk who still remembers Abûnâ Ishaq who reinhabited and reconstructed the monastery in 1898.

Of the relatively few Ethiopian monks who still live in Egyptian monasteries, Abûnâ Rafâîl (Raphael) al-Habashî at Dair Anbâ Samwîl is one.

The monastery fellowship of St. Samuel practised the communal life to a high degree. Though the monks eat normally in their cells, they meet every Saturday for a common meal which is served in the dining-room in the qasr, until the new refectory is completed. The monks live humbly with a great sense of spirituality, and there seemed to be no distinction made between the older monks who are less educated and the young group. It is beyond doubt that the older monks benefited by the industry, the "know how" and the diligence of the younger men. In almost Pachomian style,[60] the labour of the monastery is divided among the monks, so that every monk has a full day's work. Once a week all monks engage in baking bread. Abûnâ Mattâ related that on one occasion he had to be away for several weeks, and his monks ordered him to return to the Desert.

The administration of Dair Anbâ Samwîl is in the hands of Abûnâ Mînâ as-Samwîlî, the hegoumenos of the monastery. He lives in the village of al-Zawara on the edge of the desert, west of Maghâgha. There, the Dependency contributes to the upkeep and the expansion of the monastery. In ancient times, according to Abû Sâlih, the monastery possessed land in several districts in Upper Egypt and some 16 feddans at Shubrâ. Nowadays, St. Samuel is the poorest monastery, having no land in the Nile valley or elsewhere from which to draw revenues. Apart from the eight palm trees in the monastery-yard, there is very little vegetation. Abûnâ Mattâ tried his very best to cultivate the yard by planting radishes, onions, spinach and the like. The food and other necessities for the monastery are supplied by camel caravans either from the Fayyûm or Maghâgha.

At the time of writing, some significant developments with regard to the monks of Dair Anbâ Samwîl have taken place. On December 14, 1959, the Council of Bishops of the Coptic Church officially recognized Dair Anbâ Samwîl as a Monastery of the Coptic Church.

More important, however, was the visit of Abûnâ Mattâ al-Maskîn to Anbâ Kîrillus VI. During the visit, which took place in January 1960, the Patriarch advised Abûnâ Mattâ and his band of ascetes to return to their original monastery, whereupon Abûnâ Mattâ and six monks left the Mountain of al-Qalamûn for the Monastery of the Syrians in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. Since October 1960, Abûnâ Mattâ and six other monks, after having left again the Dair as-Suriân, have completely withdrawn into the inner desert, some 100 km. south-west of the Fayyûm.

7. The Cave of St. Samuel

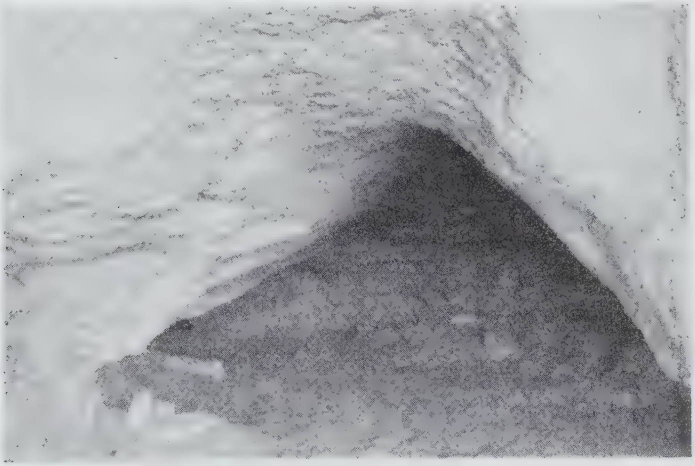
Prior to the establishment of the first monastery in the region of al-Qalamûn the monks lived in caves. These caves are to be found around the natural elevation in the Wâdî Mowâlih and the Bahr Bilâ Mâ, and a few of these natural caves are still being pointed out by the monks.

---

(60) Anbâ Bakhûm instituted the communal or coenobitic form of Coptic monasticism, where a high degree of division of labor was practised. *Cf. Pachomiana, Commémoration du XVIème Centenaire de St. Pacôme l'Egyptien.*

Abû Sâlih mentions a cave "outside the monastery in which lives a monk who is named Muhna, and he never quits it by day or by night. He fasts during the whole week. The monks go to him to receive his blessings. Around his cave there are many fruitful palm-trees. The wild beasts used to come together to him and not one of them hurt him, but they grew so tame that he was able to feed them out of his hand. The devils also appeared to him, and stood opposite to him, face to face, but could not reach him. This monk Muhna made at the beginning of his monastic life, before he shut himself up in a cave on the mountain,[61] a church. It is said that the father Anbâ Samwîl used to worship on the mountain at a place called Rayân, opposite to the monastery." [62]

The most important cave in this area is the cave of St. Samuel, situated about 4-5 km. east of the monastery in the Mountain of al-Qalamûn. According to Abûnâ Mattâ, it is quite difficult to reach the cave, though he and several other monks have visited it.



Cave of Anbâ Samwîl.

We travelled by donkey to the foot of the Mountain of al-Qalamûn, then leaving the donkey behind, we climbed the sandy ascent "on all four" a very steep slope of 35 degrees. The cave is situated at an altitude of 100 m., some 15 m. below the mountain top of al-Qalamûn.

---

(61) The "Cave on the mountain," seems to identify Abûnâ Muhna's place of residence with the Cave of St. Samuel.

(62) Abû Sâlih, *op. cit.*, 207-208.

The entrance to the cave faces towards the west, and the passage of the cave extends for some 30 m. into the rock. At the end of the passage is a water reservoir, which according to the monks is filled by the annual rain. The cave is completely plain and without decorations, except for a few Arabic graffiti. As Abûnâ Mînâ said: "Unfortunately, it is impossible for us to place an altar or icons here, because the cave is frequently used by the Bedouins. To them it is a place of shelter." The skull of a donkey and some hay are sure indications that the Bedouins repeatedly use the cave. Looking at the cave from the small balcony in front of the entrance, one notices two layers of plaster on the walls as well as on the floor. One layer shows white, the other layer is of pinkish colour. This leads one to suppose that the cave must have been inhabited by monks for a long period.

Tradition informs us that St. Samuel lived here during the last years of his life, visiting the monastery at intervals. It is probable, however, that, in the days of the Hermit of al-Qalamûn, the cave was more easily accessible than it is in our days. At the end of the 19th century, when Abûnâ Ishaq reinhabited the Dair Anbâ Samwîl, a certain Abûnâ Yuhannis is reported to have lived here. Abûnâ Ishaq stayed in the cave for only a relatively short period. The story is told by the monks that the cave has always been inhabited by anchorites, and it is quite possible that again in the middle of the twentieth century some young monk will take up the life of cave asceticism, thus following the examples of his illustrious predecessors.

8. Bait at-Takrîs li Hidmat al-Kirâzah

In 1958, inspired by Abûnâ Mattâ al-Maskîn, a small group of Coptic laymen founded the Fellowship of Consecration for the Service of the Church. For several months, seven young men lived together in an apartment-house in the vicinity of the Institute of Coptic Studies in Abbassiya. Then, on March 15, 1958, while Abûnâ Mattâ was in Cairo, the group of dedicated laymen moved to their present hostel in Helwân,[63] which at one time was a palace of a princess of the Tewfik family. Abûnâ Mattâ's idea was to establish a fellowship of devout Christians, who would lead a spiritual and contemplative life amidst the social activities of metropolitan Cairo. The relationship of the members of the fellowship of the Bait at-Takrîs with the Dair Anbâ Samwîl is a very close and intimate one. As Dr. Noshy 'Abd al-Shahîd Butrus, a

---

(63) The address is 38, Sharia Ismail Kamal, Helwân.

physician and graduate of the Coptic Theological Seminary, has pointed out: "All the monks at Dair Anbâ Samwîl are our friends, they pray for us, as we pray for them. They helped us and their example inspired us. We visit them at least once a year, and one member of our fellowship even lives there now."

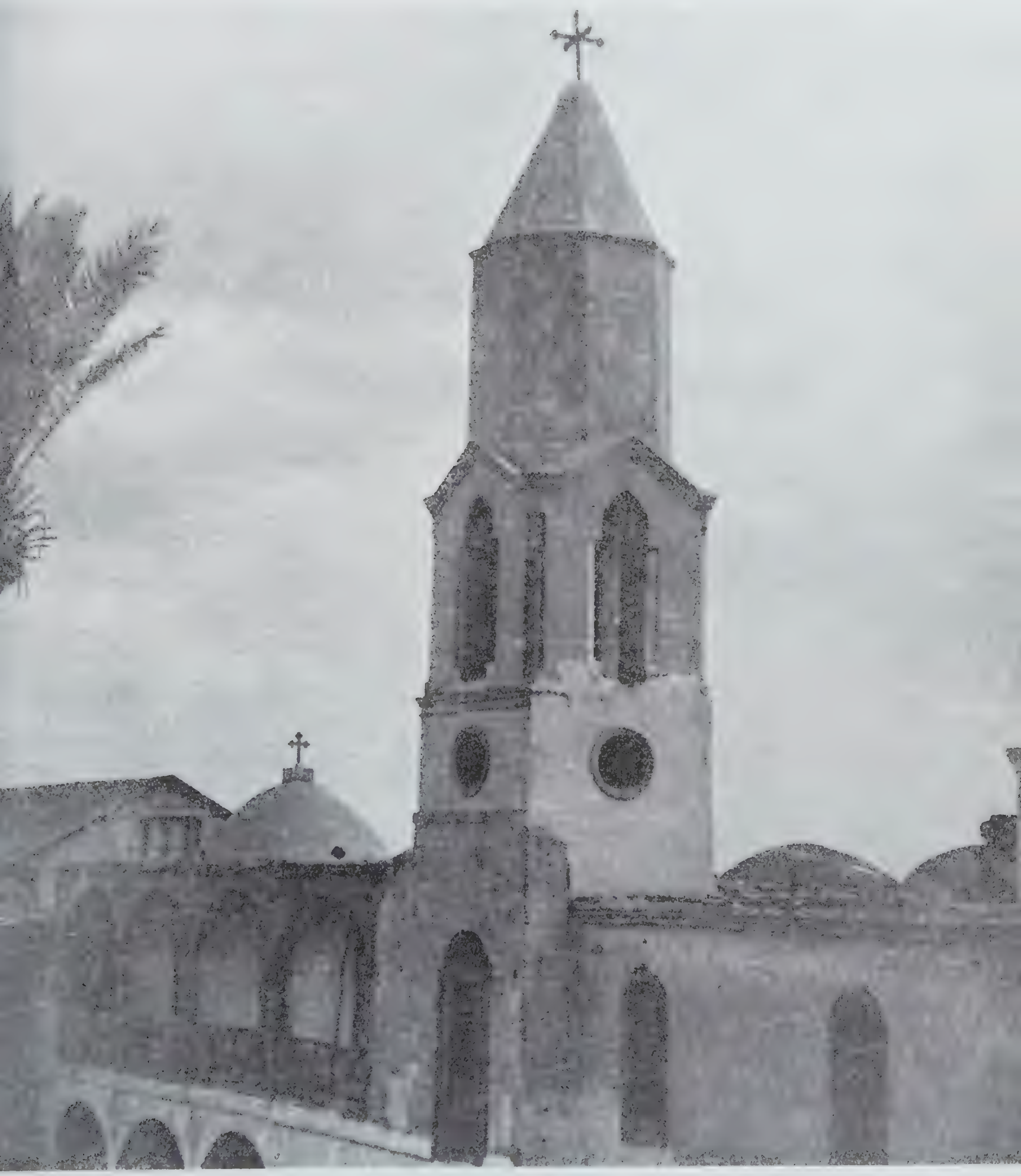
Three of the members of the fellowship are graduates of the Coptic Theological Seminary. All members of the fellowship remain celibate and promise to lead a life of total dedication to the Church, while temporarily retaining their occupations. It is hoped, however, that eventually, some if not all members may be able to leave their occupations and serve the Church full-time, yet, remaining laymen.

Bait at-Takrîs.

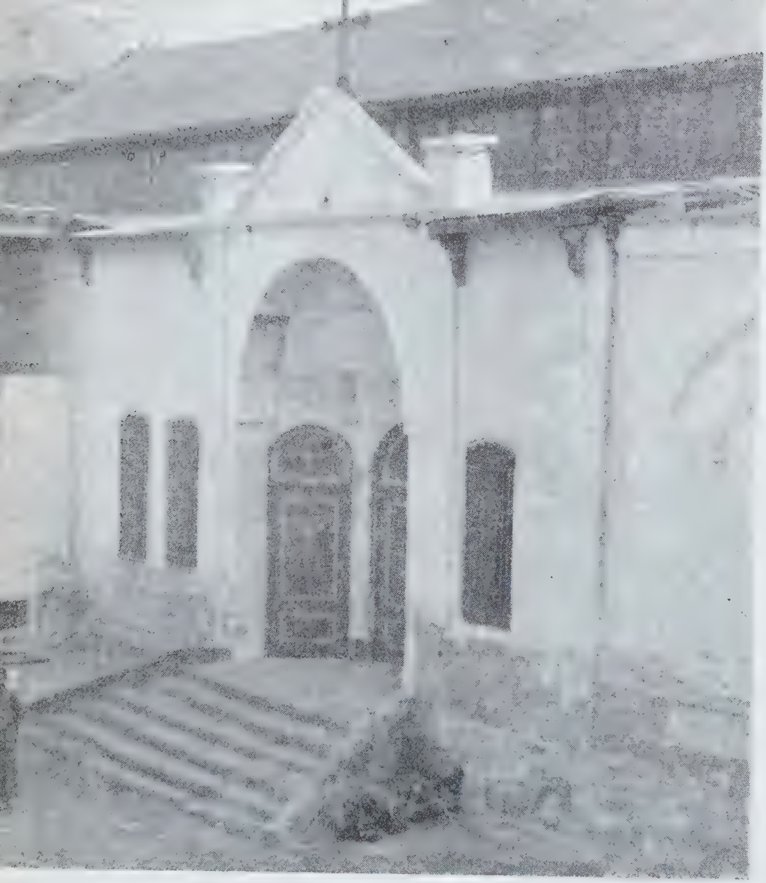
The Bait at-Takrîs occupies a site of half a feddan. The ex-palace has thirty rooms, of which seven are occupied. Though there is no church as yet, it is anticipated that one of the small buildings in the garden will be rebuilt so as to be used as a church. Furthermore, it is hoped, that one of the monks of the Dair Anbâ Samwîl will serve the fellowship as a spiritual father.

At present, all members of the fellowship are assigned to churches in Cairo, where they conduct Sunday School classes and Christian Education classes.

It is noteworthy, that the high degree of asceticism, as we find it practised at Dair Anbâ Samwîl, should at the same time produce a fellowship of dedicated laymen to serve the Church.

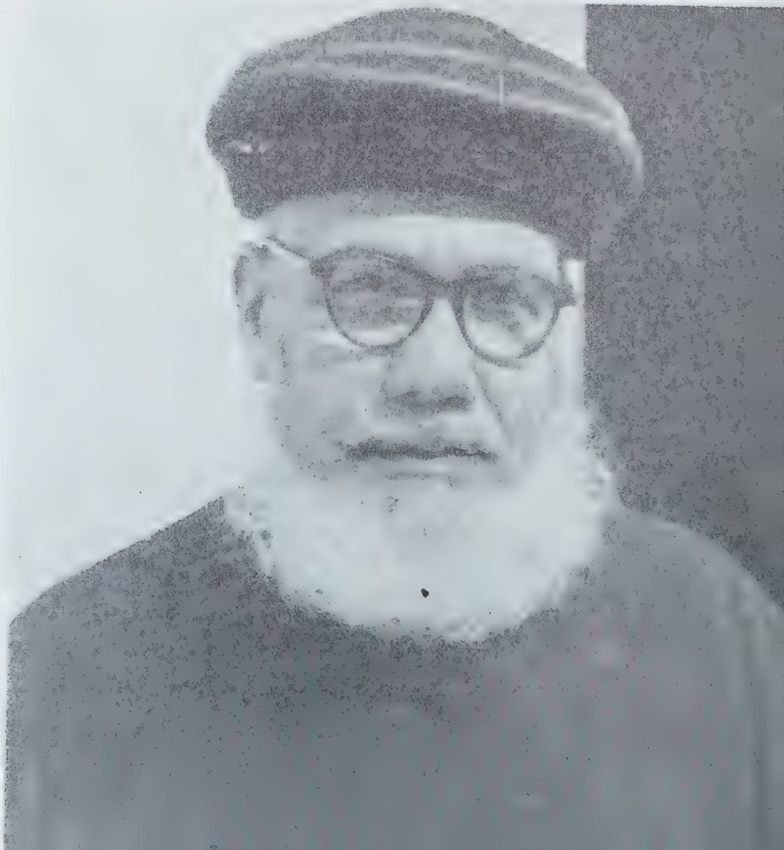


DAIR SITT DIMIANAH
The "Second Church" and Tomb of Sitt Dimîânah on extreme right.

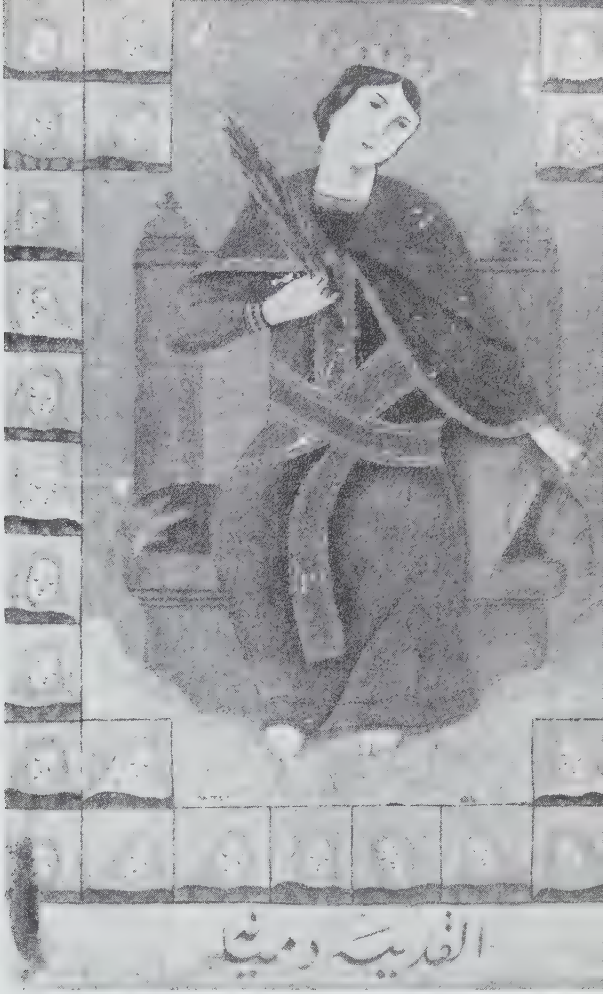


The "Third Church"
and outer Court.

Mînâ al-Antûnî.



Sitt Dimîânah.



Dair Sitt Dimîânah

THE Shrine of Sitt Dimîânah in the Nile Delta used to belong to the diocese of the Metropolitan of Jerusalem, and has been served from time immemorial by monks from the Monastery of St. Antony. To reach this shrine, one proceeds from Cairo to Mansûrah (133 km.) and from Mansûrah one travels along a rough agricultural road for 22 km. in a northerly direction to the town of Bilqas. After passing through Bilqas, one turns east on the main road to Shirbin. After two kilometres, another rough agricultural road leads north to Dair Sitt Dimîânah. The Dair appears like a large farm or estate, and has an outer and an inner court. The southern buildings enclose four churches, while the northern and the western buildings are used to accomodate the numerous pilgrims. At one time, these many rooms served as cells for the monks. At present, only two monks stay at the Dair, Abûnâ Banîâmîn al-Antûnî and Abûnâ Mînâ al-Antûnî. During the days of pilgrimage, however, the number of monks increases to six or eight, in order to minister to the spiritual needs of the pilgrims.

This Dair is known to thousands of Copts, and even Muslims, who annually attend the celebrations in honour of Sitt Dimîânah, who is one of the most popular saints in Lower Egypt. For that matter, one of the typical characteristics of the Copts is their love of and devotion to their saints.[1] The cult of the Saints and Martyrs has always occupied a very important place in the history of the Church. The martyr's bodies were venerated from an early date, the first certain evidence occurring in the 'Martyrium Polycarpi' (*ca.* 156-7) where the relics of St. Polycarp are described as 'more valuable than precious stones and finer than refined gold' to be carefully collected and honoured by a memorial service for the saint at the place where they were laid.

The feasts commemorating the saints are a very ancient institution in Egyptian life, and it is interesting to observe that they are in many ways as much a communal affair, as a strictly religious gathering. We have a parallel to this in the 'Panegyris' or Fairs held at the Patronal Feasts of a Saint in Greece and Cyprus, or the European Fairs like St. Giles Fair at Oxford, the "Kirmiss" or Church-mass in Brittany and Flanders.

The first reference to this annual pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. Dimîânah by travellers from the West, is that given by Wansleben in his *Nouvelle relation d'un voyage en Egypt.* Wansleben, who visited the shrine in 1672, says that after having for three days carefully watched the apparitions, which are alleged to take place at certain times in one of its chapels, he concluded that they were merely the shadows of passing objects. The chapel receives light through two openings in its cupola, and a faint image of any one passing the church, at a certain distance opposite these openings, is thrown on the wall. If a man on horseback happens to pass, the superstituous congregation beholds its favorite St. George. If a woman passes with a child in her arms, the appearance is greeted of the Virgin with Christ. Fr. C. Sicard, S.J., travelled in May 1714 via Mansûrah and Bilqas to the Dair of "Sainte-Gemianne", where he saw a church with 22 domes. He mentions the tradition of St. Dimîânah and the many miracles associated with her, as well as the fact that the pilgrimage attracts both Christians and Muslims alike.[2] Sir Gardner Wilkinson (1843) in his book on *Modern Egypt and Thebes* mentions this Dair and the fair associated with it. "A short distance inland, S.W. of the Damietta branch, in the convent of Sitte Gamian, to which the Copts make an annual pilgrimage, and which is visited by Muslims as well as Christians."[3] The first Protestant missionaries to attend a pilgrimage to the Dair Sitt Dimîânah were Mr. McCague and Mr. 'Awad Hanna. In 1860, these two men visited the Nile Delta and disposed of $ 110 worth of literature, most of it being Scriptures. For the most part, these sales took place in the city of Tanta and at the Dair Sitt Dimîânah.[4] In May, 1863, during one of the annual pilgrimages, the Reverend Gulian Lansing of the United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., went to the Delta on the Damietta branch of the Nile accompanied by Mr. 'Awad Hanna. They visited the Dair Sitt Dimîânah which was famous for the visions of celestial riders that could be seen within its doors. In his book *Egypt's Princes,* Dr. Lansing offers a very vivid and detailed account of his experience with the priests of the Dair and with the Patriarch who happened to be attending the celebrations.[5] In 1903, the monastery was visited by another missionary, the Reverend Fr. M. Jullien, S.J. From the account which he gives, one gains the impression that his reception must have been very similar to the one that I experienced. He was received by two monks of the Monastery of St. Antony, who related to him the story of Sitt Dimîânah. Though some minor details of the tradition, as recorded by Fr. Jullian, vary from that given below, the important elements in the life of the Saint are the same. In April 1913, Elie Sidawi visited the Shrine of Sitt Dimîânah, and reported his impressions in a very significant study of the origin of the celebrations connected with the Saint.[6]

---

[1] This love of and devotion to the Saints is also characteristic of all Christians of the Eastern Church.

[2] Sicard, *Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses,* III, 204-5.

A full and rather interesting report of the celebrations in honour of Sitt Dimîânah is also presented by Leeder. "The moolid is still attended every year, between May 5 and May 20, by some 4,000 to 6,000 pilgrims coming from all parts of Egypt. They usually pitch a tent round the monastery, and live there for a period of not less than eight, and not more than fifteen days, ending with the actual day of the celebrations. Numbers of merchants usually go and hold bazaars, in which they sell food, drink, sometimes clothing, ornaments, perfumes, rings, handkerchiefs, sticks, etc., and especially wooden and brass crosses imported from Jerusalem. They refer to Sitt Dimîânah for the ability to give fruitfulness to women, or long life to the children of a woman who has lost many in infancy. Therefore, many gifts of money,

---

(3) Wilkinson, *Modern Egypt and Thebes,* II, 410.

(4) Watson, *The American Mission in Egypt,* 118.

(5) Watson, *op. cit.,* 157-8, Lansing, *Egypt's Princes,* 376-408.

(6) Sidawi, "Sitti Dimiana. Sa légende, son mouled," *Bull. Soc. Roy. Géogr. d'Egypte,* VIII, (1917), 79-99.

jewels, gold and silver are presented to her church."[7]

The pilgrimage takes place annually on the date on which the church was dedicated by St. Helena, on May 21, and the day of the martyrdom of Sitt Dimîânah on January 20.

The main interest for European visitors are the four churches of the Dair and the tomb of Sitt Dimîânah. The four churches of the Dair are : The First Church of Sitt Dimîânah, the Second Church of Sitt Dimîânah, the Third Church of Sitt Dimîânah, and the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

According to Abûnâ Banîâmîn al-Antûnî, the initial development of the Dair began with the building of the tomb of Sitt Dimîânah and her Forty Virgins by St. Helena, the mother of St. Constantine.[8] This statement agrees with the tradition recorded in an Arabic *MS.* by Anbâ Yuhannis, the Bishop of Burullus.[9]

"Then the prince rode at that (very) hour, and he travelled in the direction of Antioch (Antâkiâh), the city of the King, and the Faithful of the country came, and they gathered the bodies one upon another, and they arranged them in the form of a bee-hive, and they left the affair (thus), until the time of the persecution was over, and there reigned King Constantine (Qustantîn) the righteous, who was perfect in all qualities. And he ordered the building of churches and the destruction of the (false) temples, and that they should gather together the bodies of the martyrs from all the places, and that they should build churches for them, and that it should be at the expense of the royal house, and he arranged therefor funds to be spent on them. And it came to pass after some time, that the remembrance of this chaste Saint Gamîânah came before the King Constantine (Qustantîn), and of what had happened to her and of how she had borne sufferings for a long time in the Valley of as-Sîsbân at az-Za'afrânah. Thereupon, he provided his mother, the blessed Helena (Hîlânah) for the journey, and he said to her : "Take shrouds and clothing, and set out for az-Za'afrânah, and build there a church for the Lady (Sitt) Damîânah and for the martyrs who are with her." And she journeyed, and with her there was an army, until she reached that Palace, and she found the bodies like a swarm of bees, and they were not touched by any wild beast or any bird. Then she entered and she received a blessing from them (the bodies), and she came to the stairway, and she went up to the Palace, and she found the body of the Mistress (Saidah) Gamîânah [10] upon the throne upon which she used to sit, when she was in the flesh, and she (Helena) kissed it, and she found around her in the Palace the bodies of the forty virgins, and she shrouded them all with beautiful shrouds. Then she assembled workmen and architects, and she demolished that Palace, and she built beneath it a strong vault in the earth, and she placed in it all the bodies, just as they were in the Palace. Then she shrouded the body of the Mistress (Saidah) Gamîânah in a very costly shroud, and she made for her a magnificent couch of ivory fashioned with beautiful workmanship, and she placed the body of the Saint upon it, and she made for it a curtain of costly silk (after) the fashion or (model) of Constantin (Qustantîn), embroidered in red and gold. She built above the vault a fine church with one small dome. And the father, the Patriarch Alexander (Alâksandârus) consecrated it on the 12th of the month of Bashons, and he set apart for it a saintly bishop, for the Bishop of az-Za'afrânah and Burullus had received the crown of martyrdom among all the martyrs who were placed in this church, and he appointed priests, deacons and ministers who offer up prayers night and day." [11]

---

[7] Leeder, *Modern Sons of the Pharaohs*, 136, ff.

[8] There is no historical evidence that St. Helena ever visited Egypt. There are some monks who say, that the church was built by her order.

[9] The date written at the end of the *MS.* is 1776 A.D. For a translation of this *MS. cf.* al-Masrî, "A Historical Survey of the Convents for Women in Egypt up to the present Day." 71.

Abûnâ Banîâmîn (Benjamin), apparently acquainted with this tradition, continued his story by saying that the relics of Sitt Dimîânah were placed upon a small elevation, and the bodies of her forty virgins were placed around her. At that time, there was neither a church nor any regular settlement, and the site of the Dair was determined by the original monastic estate of the Saint.

This area was known as the Wâdî Za'afarânah, a very fertile region of the Delta. The governor of this area, Marcus, was a Christian who lived in the middle of the third century. He had only one child whom he named Dimîânah. When the girl grew up and had reached the age to be married, her father chose for her a nobleman. But Dimîânah refused to marry, for she had been taught the Christian virtue of virginity. "If you really care for me," she told her father, "build me a castle where I can live and preserve my virginity and serve my Christ." And her father built her a large palace covering an area of 15 feddans. Soon the daughters of the other noblemen followed the example of Dimîânah, and she and the forty virgins served the Lord.

---

(10) This is an alternative spelling of the name Dimîânah.

(11) Girgis Fîlûthâûs 'Awad, *A Homily on the Martyr Dimîânah by John, Bishop of Burullus*, 71-73.

At this time, Romanus was king of Constantinople. He was a great warrior and consequently he fell in battle.[12] One of his daughters, after the death of her father fell in love with a servant of Romanus. His name was Diocletian, an Egyptian of simple birth who came from the town of Akhmîm.[13] After Diocletian had married the daughter of the king, the kingship was transferred to him. But Diocletian was a pagan and he made himself a god. So one day he summoned all the noblemen from Egypt, demanding from them to worship the Roman gods. Those who agreed were honoured with additional lands, while those who refused to worship the gods were persecuted and tortured. Marcus, the father of Dimîânah, had decided to give up his Christian faith and he was awarded land and other properties. But when he returned to Egypt his daughter said: "Either you become a Christian again, or I refuse to be called your daughter." Marcus went back to Diocletian and made a Christian confession and the king ordered Marcus to be killed. When the king discovered that Dimîânah had inspired her father to change his religion, he sent a statue of himself to Dimîânah's castle, demanding from her and her virgins to worship it. She and her forty virgins refused and consequently they were tortured and killed.

According to the tradition of the monks, the first church in commemoration of this event was built by Anbâ Yûânnis, the 29th patriarch, but this church was destroyed when the floods of the sea covered the whole land. The tomb of Sitt Dimîânah and her forty virgins remained under water for seventy years (?). Then the Christians began to pray asking God to withdraw the waters from their holy shrine, and the waters receded. When Anbâ Yûânnis II (the successor to Yûânnis I) camped near the original estate of the Saint, he had a dream. Sitt Dimîânah appeared to him and ordered him to build a church, and the Patriarch obeyed her and built a church in her honour. This then is the First Church of Sitt Dimîânah, which is situated in the south-westerly part of the Dair. There is no doubt, whatsoever, that this building constitutes the most ancient part of the whole Dair. The

---

(12) Romanus I, was an East Roman Emperor. His daughter's name was Helena who was married to Constantine.

(13) Diocletian (245-313 A.D.), Roman Emperor, said to have been born at Dioclea, near Salona, in Dalmatia. A legendary account of Diocletian states that his original name was Agripidos, and that he was born in a village near Magûg. While serving as stable boy in the imperial stables he fell in love with a princess whom he married after the emperor's death, the princess claimed the throne, and her husband was crowned emperor. O'Leary, *Saints of Egypt*, 17.

church is a long and narrow building filled with debris and rubbish, so that it is impossible to estimate even its original height. The stone screens divide the church into three separate parts which Abûnâ Mînâ identified as the Angels' choir, the Saints' choir, and the Martyrs' choir. All that is visible now is a prayer niche in the eastern part of the church. The church has been used, and obviously still is, as a stable or a rubbish heap. The monks say that at one time Sitt Dimîânah and her forty virgins used to worship there.

The second church of Sitt Dimîânah known as the "old church", was built in the latter part of the 19th century by Anbâ Yuhannis, Metropolitan of Burullus. One reaches the church through the inner court of the Dair. Apart from the wooden screen, the church is uninteresting. It has one haikal which is dedicated to Sitt Dimîânah. The haikal screen bears the date of 1845 A.D. and, therefore, antedates the building of the church. North of the sanctuary there is a prayer-chamber for men, with icons and pictures of Sitt Dimîânah, St. George and the Blessed Virgin Mary. In front of the prayer-chamber there is a candelabrum with an icon of Sitt Dimîânah and her forty virgins attached to it. South of the sanctuary there is the prayer-chamber for women which has no decoration whatsoever. The only visible sign of a connection between the Dair Sitt Dimîânah and the Monastery of St. Antony are the icons of St. Antony and St. Paul the Theban, which are attached to the haikal screen.

In the western part of the church there is the tomb of Sitt Dimîânah. Three steps lead up to the tomb which is enclosed by a wooden screen.[14] Twenty-five little oval-shaped windows in the screen enable the pilgrims to view the shrine. The screen, which encloses the tomb, was built by Galîl Ibrâhîm, the carpenter of Bilqas in 1887. Small rags and pieces torn from handkerchiefs are attached to the screen by pious pilgrims as votive offerings. The wooden cross which stands three feet west of the tomb bears the following inscription: "The great martyr, the Virgin Dimîânah, 1879, made at the home of Anbâ Basilîûs." [15]

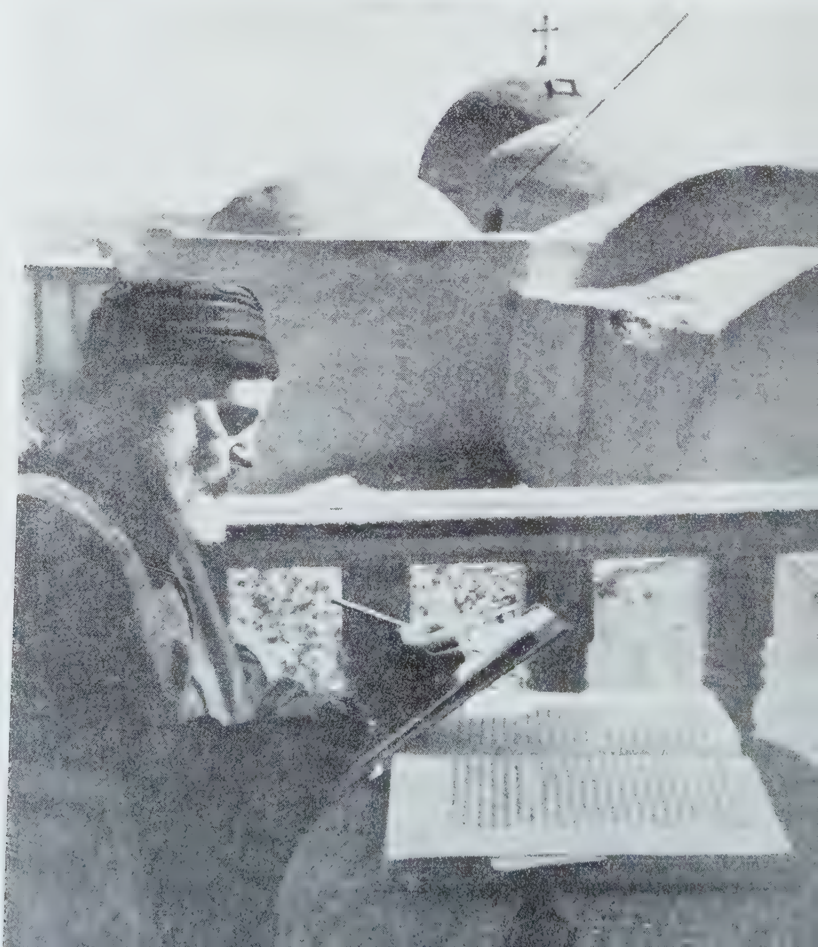
East of the cross there is a large icon of Sitt Dimîânah and her

---

(14) Some relics of the Saint are kept in the Church of St. Barbara in Old Cairo. *Cf.* Burmester, *A Guide to the Ancient Coptic Churches of Cairo*, 33.

(15) The Church has been destroyed and rebuilt several times. It was restored as it now stands by Anbâ Basîlîûs II, Metropolitan of Jerusalem, (1818-1899). Leeder, *op. cit.*, 143,

Monastic Occupations.



forty-eight virgins.[16] It is covered with silver and only the faces of Sitt Dimîânah and the virgins are prints which are stuck on the silver icon.

The third church of Sitt Dimîânah which is in the outer court of the Dair is a very recent construction. It was built in 1932 by Anbâ Butrus, Bishop of Mansûrah, and was completed by Anbâ Timûtâûs. Its dimensions are 40 metres by 20 metres. The church has only one haikal. Above the stone screen there is a modern icon of the Mystical Supper, on both sides of which there are icons of six apostles and two large icons of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Christ. The building of the church has evidently responded to the need which was to accommodate the increasing number of pilgrims.

The fourth church of the Dair is situated on the first floor of the south wing of the inner court. It is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The date of its construction is 1879. The green painted wooden haikal screen is anything but aestetic, and there are no signs that the church has been used in recent times.

The Dair, though visited annually by thousands of pilgrims has been called upon by only a few foreigners. The monks informed me that they could not remember any foreigner visiting them. Unfortunately, the monastery does not possess a guest-book. The guest-room is the best furnished room of the Dair. A telephone, a few chairs and a small table form the furniture in the large room.

The wealth of the Dair has decreased recently from 150 feddans to 30 feddans. The other 120 feddans are now administered by the Patriarchate. At present the Dair serves merely as a place for the annual pilgrimages in honour of the martyrdom of Sitt Dimîânah and her forty virgins. Every year the list of miracles performed by the Patron Saint increases as more and more visitors and pilgrims attend the annual event. Abûnâ Banîâmîn (Benjamin) related many stories about miracles which occurred during the annual pilgrimage.

"One of the most spectacular cures I remember occurred this spring (1958), when a woman, who was possessed by an evil spirit and crippled, was carried to the tomb of Sitt Dimîânah. She had been transported to the Dair from Alexandria. After having stayed for two days in the Dair and after having been visited by Sitt Dimîânah, she was completely restored, and was able to walk away.."

"In 1950, a certain woman of ill-fame was on her way to attend the annual pilgrimage at Dair Sitt Dimîânah. Among her provisions

---

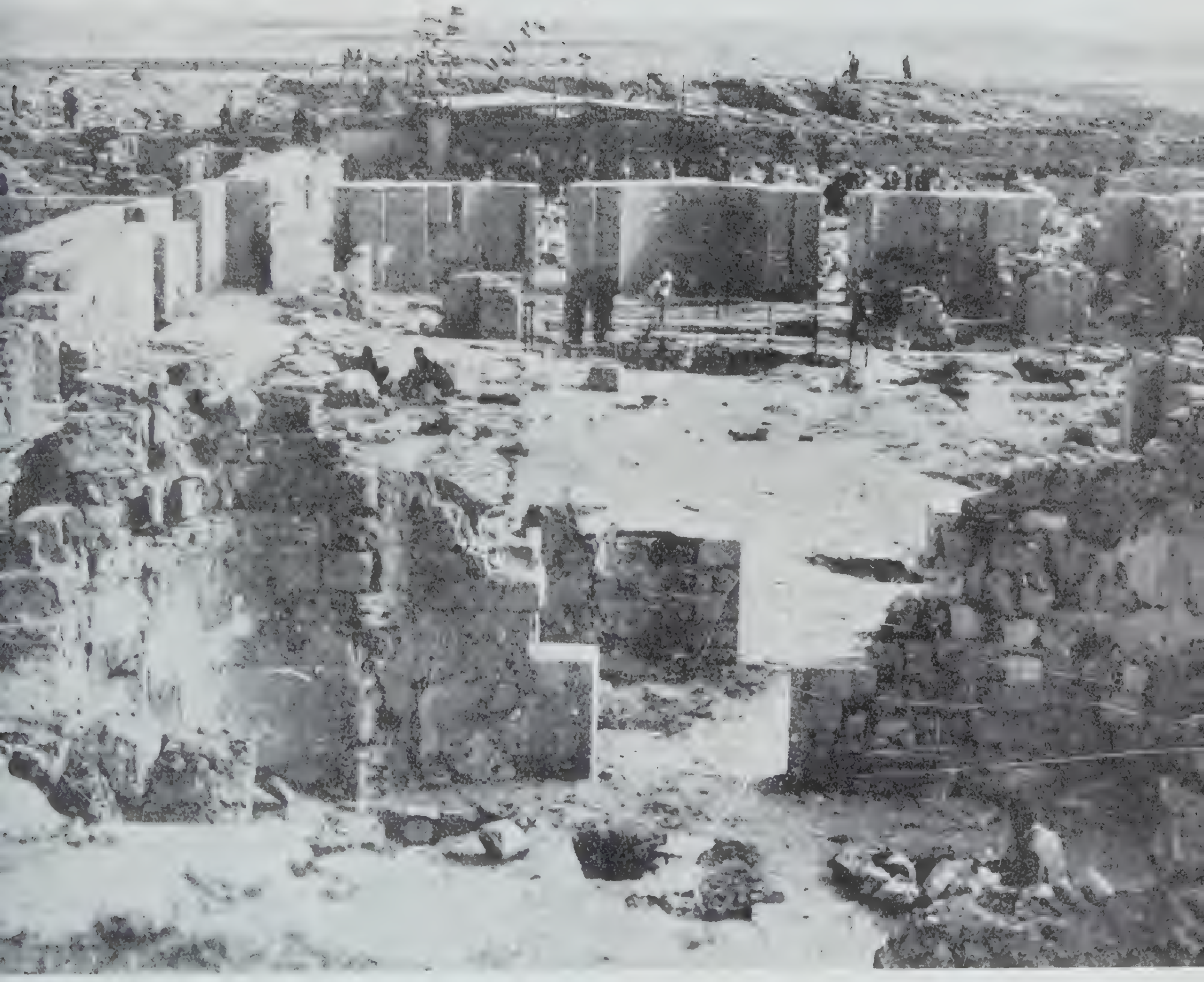
(16) The tradition says forty virgins. I was told that the artist who was interested in the symmetry of the icon added the eight other virgins.

she carried a water-jar. Before entering the Dair she wanted to refresh herself, but, when she opened her water-jar, she discovered that the water had changed into blood. She asked the taxi-driver as to the meaning of this miracle and he said: "Sitt Dimîânah does not want you, for you are defiled." So she took the taxi and returned to her home." Leeder reports that "some visitors state that Sitt Dimîânah used to appear in years past in a small window in an old dome which still remains, and is believed to be the dome of the first church consecrated in the name of Sitt Dimîânah. It is said, that she appeared after prayer and praise had been offered for several hours. But those who have inquired into this matter say that this might be only the reflection of some people passing along the roof, beside the dome." [17]

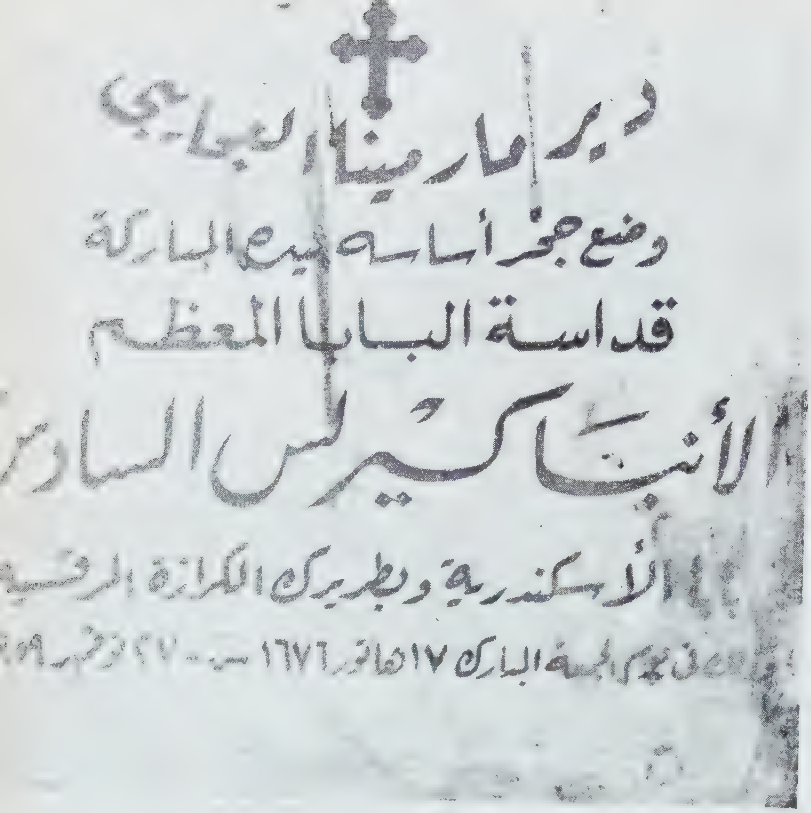
Muslims also respect the Saint and believe that she is the means of granting to them important benefits. Muslims can be even heard singing her name calling her: "Ya Sitt ya bint al-wali." (O Lady, O daughter of the governor.) [18]

---

(17) Leeder, *op. cit.*, 145. (18) *Ibid.*

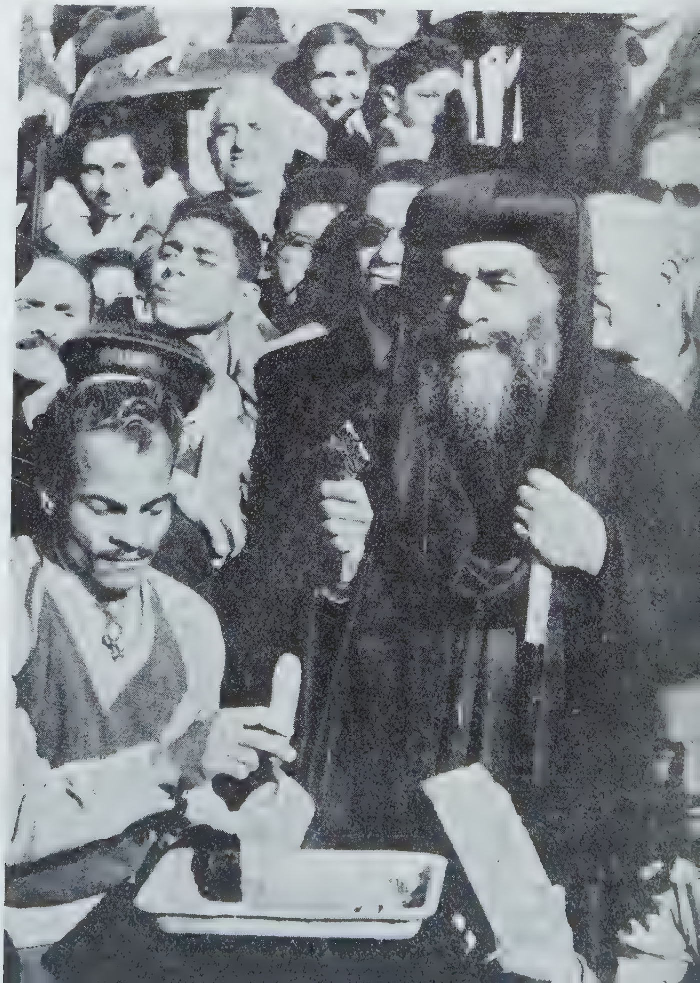


DAIR ABU MINA
View from the West.



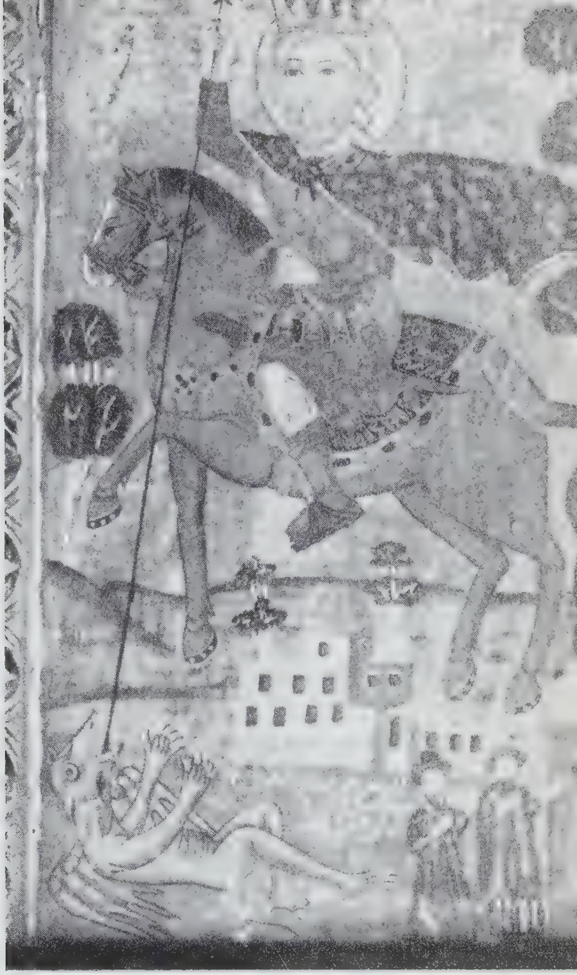
دير مارمينا العجايبي
وضع حجر أساسه بيده المباركة
قداسة البابا المعظم
الأنبا كيرلس الساد
الإسكندرية وبطريرك الكرازة المرقسـ
في يوم الجمعة المبارك ١٧ هاتور ١٦٧٦ ش - ٢٧ نوفمبر ٩٥٩

Foundation stone of the new Monastery of Abû Mînâ.



Anbâ Kîrillus VI laying the foundation stone for the new monastery.

St. Menas



Dair Abû Mînâ

The Life of Abû Mînâ

St. Menas (Abû Mînâ),[1] who is commemorated by the Latin and Greek Churches on November 11, and by the Egyptian Church on the 15th of Hatûr, was an Egyptian officer in the Roman army at the time of the Emperor Diocletian.[2] His mother, Euphemia, and his father,

---

[1] The problem of the historicity of St. Menas has been discussed by Drescher, *Apa Mena,* i-x, Delehaye, "L'invention des reliques de Saint Menas à Constantinople," Wiedemann, "Die Menas-Legenden, Ihre volkskundliche und Literarische Bedeutung." Three possible views are put forward. Either St. Menas was an Egyptian and lived and died in Egypt, or he was a Phrygian martyr, or there were two Sts. Menas, the one Egyptian, the other Phrygian, and they were confused by the hagiographer. Sir W. Ramsey asserts that St. Menas is merely the Phrygian god Men in a Christianized form. *Journal of Hellenic Studies,* 38, 151 f., 166 f. Miedema postulates, that St. Menas' cult resembles those of Horus, Osiris, Anubis, and Amen. *De Heilige Menas,* v.

[2] Synaxarium, *Patr. Orient.,* III, 293-298; "The Encomium of Apa Mena by John, Archbishop of Alexandria," Drescher, *Apa Mena,* 128-149. *Ethiop. Synax.,* 15 Khedâr, Budge I, 246-249.

Eudoxius, who was prefect of Phrygia in Asia Minor, had provided St. Menas with a good Christian education. At the age of fifteen, after the death of his parents, St. Menas gave all his possessions to the poor intending to devote his life to the service of God. His father's successor in the prefecture, however, was much interested in the young man, and he compelled him to join the regiment of the Rutiliaces, which was stationed at Cotiaeum in Asia Minor.[3] And a law was passed saying: "Diocletian and Maximian proclaim in every land that everyone carry out the service of the gods," whereupon St. Menas fled into the desert, where he had a vision which inspired him to martyrdom. "Thy martyrdom will be greater than the martyrs of a multitude of blood witnesses, thy name will be honoured, and peoples from every quarter of the earth will come and take refuge in thy sanctuary, which will be erected in the land of Egypt, and thy power will manifest itself, and wonderful things, signs, and cures will come about through thy holy body."

On the occasion of games and a festival at Cotiaeum, which attracted annually multitudes of peoples from all over Phrygia, St. Menas stepped into the arena, and, in a loud voice confessed his faith in Jesus Christ. The Governor Pyrrhus had no other choice, he was compelled to carry out the imperial decrees, and St. Menas was imprisoned. Several times, St. Menas was given the chance to recant, but every time, the Saint testified to his faith in Jesus Christ. All the horrors and tortures of the Imperial Roman *quaestiones* could not persuade him to deny his faith. The only wish, which St. Menas expressed, was to be buried in his native land of Egypt. Finally, in 296 A.D., St. Menas won the Martyrs' crown. Some time afterwards a certain troop of soldiers was ordered from Phrygia to the Cyrenaica, and the officer who was in their command was a Christian by the name of Athanasius. Desirous to fulfil the last wish of St. Menas, Athanasius took the body of the Saint to Egypt. At the first stopping place in Mareotis, after a successful battle had been waged, the camel carrying the Saint's body refused to advance any further, and thus, St. Menas was buried in the Western Desert, in the vicinity of the Lake Mareotis.

People soon began to visit the tomb of the Saint. A lame boy who saw a shining light over the tomb, was healed. A poor shepherd, whose sick lamb rolled on the ground and was later miraculously healed, attributed the cure to the therapeutic effects of the water of the well

---

(3) Cotiaeum, now Kutaiah is situated on the Pursak Su, an affluent of the Sakaria. The town lies at an important point of the great road across Asia Minor from Istanbul to Aleppo. In 1833, Muhammad 'Alî concluded here the peace with Turkey.

of St. Menas. The good news of the cures spread rapidly. The only daughter of the Emperor St. Constantine the Great, who suffered from leprosy, was healed, and men and women suffering from divers diseases were cured at the tomb of St. Menas.

St. Menas was well known throughout the centuries and in numerous countries for the many miracles which he had wrought, and his popular veneration is testified by the many shrines and churches which were built in his honour, in Europe, as well as in the Orient. A collection of seventeen miracles of St. Menas, which has been attributed to Anbâ Tawfîlus, Patriarch of Alexandria, has been made available by the translations of Drescher. The contents of these miracles can be briefly listed as follows :

1. The punishment of an owner of a barren camel who broke his vow.
2. A murdered pilgrim is brought to life again.
3. The punishment of Eutropius for withholding the dish due to St. Menas.
4. The rescue of a woman pilgrim who was molested by a soldier and his punishment.
5. The punishment of Pastamon who stole St. Mena's pigs.
6. The idol-worshipper's mare gives birth to a foal with three legs.
7. Pig-offering killed by devil brought to life again.
8. The punishment of a Christian who swears falsely against a Jew.
9. The cures of a paralysed man and a dumb woman.
10. The rescue of a pilgrim seized by a crocodile.
11. The punishment of a soldier who interferes with wood-offering.
12. The punishment of a man who kills a pig of St. Menas.
13. The rescue of another woman-pilgrim molested by a soldier.
14. The punishment of a rich man who steals a poor woman's sheep.
15. The cure of a man possessed with the devil.
16. The rescue of a Samaritan woman-pilgrim from an inn-keeper.
17. Water brought, when pilgrims are suffering from draught.[4]

Besides the collections, we find a few isolated miracles, many of which are no doubt derived from the common stock of folklore. In this context it might be interesting to cite here a few modern miracle stories of St. Menas.

"Many years ago, on a spot in the cultivation in Upper Egypt where a church dedicated to Mârî Mînâ al-'Agayebî now stands, there was a square plot of halfa-grass. This site was claimed by the Muslims as the burial-place of a sheikh. There was a very poor man who lived

---

(4) Drescher, *op. cit.*, 107.

in the town adjoining these fields and who acted as *farrâsh* at the sugar factory in the same town. One night while he was sleeping he felt someone give him a kick. This naturally aroused him, and he saw standing beside him a man whose face and form were of great beauty, and who was clothed in white garments. This man told the poor *farrâsh* that he was Mârî Mînâ al-'Agayebî, that he wished him to build a church, and that he would himself indicate the spot on which he wished it to be erected... Mârî Mînâ then led the *farrâsh* to the patch of halfa-grass in the fields and told him to dig the whole plot which he had measured out to a depth of two and half metres. Furthermore, the Saint told him, that he would find a large quantity of bricks, enough for the building of the church, while to the east he would find piles of white lime to be used in the construction of the building... The Saint told the *farrâsh* that he was to start at once to build the church, and that if he disobeyed the orders he would be killed. Then Mârî Mînâ vanished. The *farrâsh* set to work and found everything as the Saint had told him. The church still stands on this spot, but the old *farrâsh* who built it has, of course, been dead for a long time, and since his day the building has been enlarged by one of the Coptic bishops.[5]

Dr. T.D. Mosconas, librarian of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, refers to a story of a horseman who appeared in Mareotis a few days before the great battle of 'Alamain (October 1942), urging the allied soldiers in Egypt to fight shoulder to shoulder, alleged to be St. Menas,[6] and in the *Egyptian Gazette* of November 10, 1942, we read, "St. Menas is now hailed by the Greeks in Egypt as the Saviour of Alexandria from the onslaught of the Axis troops... It was a case of St. Menas v. Rommel, with the first round won by the Egyptian Saint... The Saint's festival was therefore celebrated with due solemnity, and at the Cathedral of St. Saba, Alexandria, H. B. Patriarch Christopher II was present at the Doxology. Many devout Greeks are already speaking of subscribing towards the erection of a Church to St. Menas to be situated somewhere near the site of the old Monastery." [7]

The Shrine of Abû Mînâ

There were many martyrs' shrines in Egypt, but their popularity was generally confined to their own districts. The only two martyrs' shrines which had an international reputation were those of SS. Cyrus

---

(5) Blackman, *The Fellahin of Upper Egypt*, 248-9.

(6) Mosconas, personal correspondence of December 28, 1959.

(7) Mosconas, *loc. cit.*

and John at Abûkir and of St. Menas at Maryût, and of these, that of St. Menas was undoubtedly the more celebrated one.

During the reign of St. Constantine, a small oratory, like a tetrapylon was built over the tomb of the Saint. "They hung a lamp in its midst... which remained burning, without ever going out, day and night. And all who took away some of the oil of the lamp to distant lands received healing ; so that a great concourse gathered there as well as countless multitudes from every land coming thither at all times unceasingly." [8]

During the patriarchate of St. Athanasius, a church was built over the tomb of the Saint, and bishops, priests and laity rejoiced in the consecration of the first Church of Abû Mînâ.[9] The fame of the signs and wonders which appeared in that church through the intercession of St. Menas, the martyr, was noised abroad everywhere. Soon, the church became too small to accommodate all the pilgrims, who came from many parts of the Ancient World. St. Timothy, Patriarch of Alexandria, refers to a certain Jew, who went to the Church of St. Menas, and found his expectations fulfilled. In gratitude he donated a large sum of money to the Church of St. Menas. [10]

During the reign of the Emperor Arcadius, the sanctuary was enlarged through the building of a great basilica, which, to this day, is known as the Church of Arcadius. The Emperor Zeno then constructed a large city and a palace for himself in the vicinity of the shrine. An Ethiopic *MS.* tells of the visit of the Emperor Zeno to the Shrine of St. Menas, and the subsequent occupation of the sacred site by 12,000 soldiers for its defense against the marauding Bedouins.[11] Furthermore, the Emperor ordered that the food for the people at the Shrine of St. Menas should be supplied by the inhabitants of Mareotis, and that the pilgrims to the Shrine were to pay a certain sum of money for their food, which they obtained there.[12]

"And again in the time of Anastasius (491-518), the king, pious zeal inspired the heart of the Praetorian Prefect since he too heard of

---

(8) "The Encomium". Drescher, op. *cit.*, 144.

(9) *Ethiop. Synax.*, 15 Sanê, Budge IV, 1001.

(10) An icon (18th cent.) of St. Menas with the Jewish pilgrim is preserved in the Coptic Museum, Old Cairo.

(11) The number of the soldiers varies according to the source. The "Encomium" speaks of 1,200, an Arabic text (Simaika, *Cat. of the Copt. and Arab. MS. i. Copt. Museum*, I, 1063) has 12,000, and Budge's Ethiopic text 123,000.

(12) Chaîne, "Aethiopische Texte der Pariser Nationalbibliothek", 44.

wonders and miracles wrought by the holy Apa Mena. And furthermore he saw the hardships suffered by the many multitudes coming to the shrine. For, when they left the lake and entered upon the desert there, they found no place of lodgment or water till they reached the holy shrine. And the prefect built hospices by the lake and rest-houses for the multitudes. And he had the market-place established among them in order that the multitudes might find and buy all their needs. He had spacious depositories constructed where the multitudes could leave their clothes and baggage and everything which they brought to the shrine.'" [13]

The number of priests and monks attached to the Church of St. Menas is difficult to estimate, though Kaufmann feels justified in speaking of several hundred priests, apart from thousands of shopkeepers, workmen, etc., who inhabited the Desert of Mareotis in the fifth and sixth century.[14]

Ever since the discovery of the St. Menas Baths by the Kaufmann expedition in 1907, the sacred Shrine in the Desert of Maryût has been compared with Lourdes, for it is beyond doubt that large numbers of pilgrims went to the Shrine of St. Menas to be healed by the waters, which had such a beneficial therapeutic effect.[15] Menas ampullæ embossed with the effigy of the Saint together with inscriptions for containing the sacred water, were on sale and found their way into almost every part of the Ancient World.[16] In the Church of St. Menas, Kaufmann discovered an ancient graffito by a pilgrim from Smyrna: «ΜΗΝΑ ΠΑΝΚΑΛΟΝ ΛΑΒΕ ΥΔωΡ ΟΔΥΝΗ ΑΠΕΔΡΑ» (Take the lovely water of Menas and pain disappears).

In the first part of the 6th century, Longinus, who served as "chaplain to the Pope Theodosius and as missionary to Nubia", went to the Desert of the Hermits, beyond the Blessed Mâr Mînâ, to a place called Rhamnus.[17]

About 570 A.D., the anonymous pilgrim of Piacenza visited the sacred site. "Descending through Egypt, we came to the city of Athli-

---

(13) "The Encomium", Drescher, *op. cit.*, 147-8

(14) Kaufmann, *Die Heilige Stadt in der Wüste*, 13.

(15) *Cf.* Czetsch-Lindenwald, "Das Wasser des Abu Mena."

(16) Three Menas ampullae were excavated in Curzulo, Dalmatia, and there is preserved even at Heidelberg, a Menas ampulla, which was discovered there. Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, 16.

(17) John, Bishop of Ephesus, *The Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History*, 260-261. *The Ecclesiastical History* by John of Ephesus was discovered by Dr. Cureton among the *MSS.* obtained by the British Museum from the Monastery of the Syrians, Wâdî 'n-Natrûn.

bis,[18] and walked as far as the tomb of the blessed St. Menas, who works many miracles." [19]

On account of the persecution which the Copts suffered at the hands of Cyrus, Anbâ Banîâmîn I left the City of Alexandria through the western gate and passed on foot to the town of Mareotis, and from there to al-Mûna,[20] an oasis which is situated at the intersection of the ways from Alexandria to the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn and from Terrâne to Barqa.[21] In this connection we learn that the patriarch worshipped at the Great Church of St. Menas, and, after a short rest, went on to the mountain, called Barnug.[22]

Apparently, the Shrine of St. Menas survived the attacks of the Bedouins, who successively destroyed the Monasteries in the Desert of Scetis. Furthermore, there is no evidence that the Shrine was pillaged by the invading Persians, who came to Egypt at the beginning of the seventh century and destroyed so many of the churches and monasteries.

St. Sophronius [23] in his description of the Shrine of SS. Cyrus and John at Abûkir, refers to the Shrine of St. Menas the Martyr and the abode chapel in front of the Shrine, which are the pride of all Libya, "the country inhabited and protected by the Saint both before his martyrdom for Christ and afterwards. And in truth the place deserves yet greater fame and glory ; for through it Mareotis and the whole of Libya stand to this day, and above all, the great illustrious and Christ-loving city of Alexandria." [24]

It is quite likely that by the beginning of the seventh century the Shrine of St. Menas had passed into the hands of the Melkites, for we hear of the visit of the Melkite Patriarch of Alexandria, S. John the

---

(18) This is probably Athribus near Benha, not the town of the same name in Upper Egypt.

(19) Antoninus Martyr, *Of the Holy Places Visited,* 35.

(20) For a discussion on the location of al-Mûna, *cf.* p. 219, n. 20.

(21) Al-Mûna is the form given by Severus, but Quatremère seems to think that the site was called al-Mînâ.

(22) Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt,* 177. Amélineau, *La Géographie de l'Egypte à l'Epoque Copte,* 319-21, Paris, *MS.* Arab., 139-97.

(23) St. Sophronius (560-638), Patriarch of Jerusalem from 634. He was a monk first in Egypt, later near the Jordan, and finally at Jerusalem. From 633 onwards, he was the chief opponent of Monothelitism then being defended by Cyrus, Patriarch of Alexandria. He wrote extensively on the two Alexandrian saints, Cyrus and John, who are believed to have been martyred in the Diocletian persecution. Shortly before his death, St. Sophronius witnessed the capture of Jerusalem by the Saracens under Caliph 'Umar in 637.

(24) SS. Cyri et Joannis Miracula, *Patr. Graeca.* 87, 3, c. 3596.

Almoner, who, while visiting the Monasteries of Mareotis, asked to taste the local wine and reprimanded the monks because they had served him with wine not "of Mareotis" and then grapes were offered to him to bless.[25] In *Une vie inédite de St. Jean l'Aumonier* we read that he (St. John the Almoner) was not only distinguished by the generosity of his intention for exchanging and buying back captives, but also by the frugality of his manner of life. He voluntarily supported cheap and modest things and a humble household. Once, taking a goblet of wine in the largest temple of the great Martyr Menas, while praising its perfume and good quality, he asked the steward from where it was taken and for how much it was bought, and on learning from him that it had been brought from Palestine, and that the wine was bought at high price, he could not bring himself to drink it, but answered, "the humble John will not drink excellent muscat wine, and especially at such a price—serve me rather with that of Mareotis of which both the taste is poor and the price (value) is set low." [26]

The following note speaks of certain restorations, though it is unlikely that during this period the Shrine suffered severely from any raids.

Abû 'l-Makarim refers to the Monastery of the Martyr Menas, the owner of the three crowns, which came down to him from heaven, who was a native of Nakyûs, and whose pure body is buried in the Church of Maryût, which was restored in the caliphate of Hishâm ibn Marwân, when al-Walîd ibn Rufa'ah was Wâlî, at the expense of all the Christians who lived in that quarter in 725 A.D.[27]

During the patriarchate of Anbâ Mîkhâîl (744-768 A.D.) there arose the question of the jurisdiction over the Church of St. Menas, for both the Copts and the Melkites requested a decision from the Government. This was at the time of Marwân, who had allowed the Christians to rebuild many of their churches. "But the friends of Theophylact the Chalcedonian, who was called Cosmas, said to him (Marwân) : "Verily there are many churches of ours in Egypt, of which the Theodosians, that is to say the Copts, took possession, when the Government of the Romans was overthrown ; and now we have no church there. We beg the prince to write for us to Egypt, and send by us letters commending that the Church of St. Menas at Maryût be handed over to us, so that we may communicate there." For that church was famous for many

---

(25) "The Grapes of Mareotis," *Pantaenos*, 1944, 400.

(26) "Une vie inédite de St. Jean l'Aumonier," *Analecta Bollandiana*, XLV, 1927, 24.

(27) Abû Sâlih, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt...*, 103.

miracles, and had been endowed with property in many places.[28] So Cosmas took letters to 'Abd al-Malik, which directed him to settle the dispute between the Copts and the Melkites, requesting that the truth concerning the founders of the church be ascertained, and that the Church be handed over to them. Upon receipt of the letter, the two patriarchs were summoned to appear before 'Abd al-Malik. The two patriarchs (Cosmas and Mîkhâîl) engaged in theological discourses to the extent, that "the Orthodox with their arguments from the Holy Scriptures prevailed over the Chalcedonians, so that 'Abd al-Malik marvelled." [29] Then the Chalcedonians went secretly to the Government authorities, offering bribes, that they might favour them in their claims. The Patriarch Anbâ Mîkhâîl, therefore, assembled his bishops and wrote a letter, giving account of the foundation of the Church of St. Menas, and of the troubles and banishments endured by the fathers, the patriarchs, at the hands of the Chalcedonians. An excerpt of the letter is reproduced in the *History of Patriarchs* : "Mîkhâîl, by the Grace of God, bishop of the City of Alexandria and of the Theodosian people, to the governors, with regards to the Church of the glorious Saint Menas at Maryût. At that time reigned the faithful and pious princes, Arcadius and Honorius, in the days of the holy Father, the patriarch Theophilus. He began to build the Church of St. John the Baptist, and when he had finished it, he built the Church of St. Menas at Maryût, and another church named after Theodosius, son of Arcadius, the prince, who helped him to build the churches. When Theophilus was dead, all his successors added to the church, little by little, until the days of the patriarch Timothy ; so that it was he who completed it.[30] After that time there came a diabolical prince, named Marcian ; for it was he who divided the church through his corrupt creed, and banished the glorious father, the patriarch Dioscorus, who fought for the right faith of his fathers... And to this day we continue to dispute with the followers of that new creed." [31] The judge, finding that all the patriarch's words were true, decided in favour of the Jacobites.

During the patriarchate of Anbâ Murqus (799-819 A.D.), we learn of a heretical sect, the Barsanuphians, who lived *in paroecia Menae*.[32] These Barsanuphians, who had two leaders, Abraham and George, had continued for a long time from the days of the Patriarch Peter, who held the see after Timothy the Confessor, in the time of Zeno. When

---

(28) Hist. Patr., *Patr. Orient.*, V, 119.

(29) *Ibid.*, 121.

(30) This is Timothy II (457-477 A.D.)

(31) Hist. Patr., *Patr. Orient.*, V. 122.

(32) Hist. Patr., *Patr. Orient.*, X, 410.

Anbâ Murqus concerned himself with the salvation of these heretics, they readily turned to him, and accepted the Orthodox Faith. "And after the patriarch had ascertained their intentions, he ordained them bishops, and read the canonical prayers over them, and clothed them with the episcopal vestments in the Church of the Martyr, St. Menas, at Maryût, on the day of his glorious feast, which is the 15th of Hatûr, when all the Orthodox people were assembled to keep the martyr's festival.[33]

The next important reference falls in the patriarchate of Anbâ Ya'qûb (819-830). Then, we are told, "famine and plunder began to reappear at Alexandria ; and the patriarch could not find that which he was wont to give to the churches, for nothing was left to him. And the visits of the faithful from all parts to the church of the martyr of Saint Mennas at Maryût were interrupted ; and with them the patriarch used to trade. The cause of all this was the war and fighting that took place between the Egyptians and the Madlajites and Spaniards ; and the scene of these disturbances was at Alexandria." [34] A little later in the *History of the Patriarchs* further reference is made to the same difficulties : "Now that Amir began to act harshly towards the father in demanding taxes when he had nothing with which he could pay, as we related, through the poverty of the church, arising from the interruption of the pilgrimages to the church of Saint Mennas, the Martyr, in consequence of the continual wars." [35]

During the patriarchate of Anbâ Yûsâb (Joseph) (830-849 A.D.), the churches and buildings of Abû Mînâ suffered considerable damage. In 836 A.D., al-Mu'tasim decided to build the Gausaq al-Khâqânî or the Palace of al-Mu'tasim in Samarra with the most precious marble and stones which were available in his empire.[36] And he sent men to Egypt with orders that the columns and the marble should be taken from the churches in every place. "He who came to search for these things was a malignant heretic of the Nestorian sect, named Lazarus. So when he arrived in Misr, the people of his foul sect gathered together to meet him ; and they were the Chalcedonian heretics dwelling in Alexandria. They did not cease denouncing the churches by night and by day, and they persuaded Lazarus to demolish the churches in Alexandria. And they guided him to the places where there were columns and pavements ; and so he carried them off by force and violence. Afterwards they led him out to the church of the martyr, St. Menas, at Maryût, in their great jealousy against it, and then they said to him : 'None of the churches is like this one, for all that thou hast come to seek thou wilt find therein.' So that Nestorian hastily arose, by the advice of the informers, and entered the church of the martyr Saint Menas. And when he looked at the building and its ornaments, and saw the beauty of the columns and coloured marbles which it contained, he marvelled and was amazed, and said : 'This is what the prince needs. This is here, and I knew nothing of it!' Therefore our father, Abba Joseph, the patriarch, hearing that this wicked person did not hold back his hand through the evil and malice that was in his heart, and learning what the heretics had found, said to him : 'Behold, all the churches under my jurisdiction are before thee. Do with them as the prince commands thee. But this church alone I desire thee that thou injure not. And whatever thou shalt ask of me I will deliver to thee.'

---

[33] *Ibid.*, 414.

[34] *Ibid.*, 451.

[35] *Ibid.*, 468.

[36] Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, II, 231.

"Yet the heretic would not listen to the patriarch's words nor to his request, but answered him face to face with unseemly language, and then set to work and robbed the church of its coloured marbles and its unequalled pavement, which was composed of all colours and had no match, nor was its value known. And when the marble arrived at the city of Alexandria, that it might be forwarded to the court, the father was greatly grieved for the church and said : 'I know that thou art able, O holy Martyr, to exact just punishment for the wrong done to thee by this heretic, who has not respected thy house, although it is a consolation for all the faithful.' And he did not cease to mourn thus night and day for the calamity that had befallen this holy church. And he took care to restore it quietly. For he sent for surface decoration from Misr and Alexandria, and began to repair with all beautiful ornament the places where the pavements had been stripped, until no one who looked at them could perceive that anything was gone from them."[37]

In the middle of the ninth century, during the patriarchate of Anbâ Quzmân, a tragic incident occurred at one of the pilgrimages to the Shrine of Abû Mînâ. "When the feast of the martyr St. Menas drew near, the faithful people from the town and the villages came together for the feast to present their offerings and their prayers in that church,

---

(37) Hist. Patr., *Patr. Orient.*, X. 512-514. From the monumental remains Kaufmann was able to prove the robbery of pillars by the Caliph al-Mu'tasim. And Falls writes: "Even now the repairs and supports may be seen with which the protesting Patriarch Joseph sought to repair the damage." Falls, *op. cit.*, 180.

which is the delight of all the Orthodox. There came together there people in whom were devils, and one of them leaped upon and attacked another one similar to him, and they did not cease strangling one another until one of the two died. When the amîr, the wâli of Alexandria, whose name was Ahmad ibn Dînâr, heard of this affair, he commanded that the father Cosmas should be seized, and he took him and tortured him until he had received from him all the contributions, which had been paid to him (the patriarch) on the day of the feast that year, and he left him none of them." [38]

There is good reason to believe that it was customary for the patriarchs of the eighth and ninth centuries to go to the Desert of Maryût on the feast of Saint Menas, in order to celebrate the Divine Liturgy at the Shrine of the Saint. From the *History of the Patriarchs* we learn that Anbâ Shanûdah went to the Shrine of St. Menas on the 15th day of Hatûr. "While he was journeying on the way and we were following him, and before our arrival at the church, there gathered around us a great multitude of the faithful people, since they did not find water to drink. The reason for this was that the heaven had not rained for three years, and the wells and the cisterns had become dry. The patriarch, seeing the multitudes of pilgrims, celebrated the Divine Liturgy and besought the Lord that He should be mindful of His weakened and thirsty people. And when Anbâ Shanûdah had lifted up his hands to accomplish the Prayer of Sleep,[39] a great thunderstorm broke from heaven and rain descended, filling the cistern and the wells." [40] It was during the patriarchate of Anbâ Shanûdah, that the Shrine of Abû Mînâ was pillaged and destroyed by the Bedouins, who were led by a certain Muslim of the Madalgah of Alexandria. "No one was able to fight against them. They were greater murderers than any people, and they could not be withstood. They took possession of the lands and of all the property of the church of the martyr Abû Mînâ at Maryût."[41] And the Bedouins did not cease pillaging the monasteries and shrines, and the Church of St. Menas at Maryût, which was the delight of all the Orthodox people in Egypt, became a desert.[42]

An interesting description of the ruined city comes to us from a travel-account given by al-Bakrî,[43] who around the year 1086 reported

---

(38) *Hist. Patr.*, II, I, 3.

(39) i.e. Compline, *cf.* Burmester, "The Canonical Hours of the Coptic Church," *Orient. Christ. Per.* II, 95.

(40) *Hist. Patr.*, II, I, 50.

(41) *Ibid.*, 57.

(42) *Ibid.*, 60.

(43) Al-Bakrî did not visit N. Africa himself, but compiled his book from other writers, mostly of the first half of the 11th century. Creswell, *op. cit.*, I, 328.

about the sacred site of St. Menas.[44] "I left Terenouti,[45] a Coptic episcopal city in the south-west part of the Nile Delta and followed the road to Barqa, and so reached Mînâ, which is composed of the forsaken cities in the midst of the sand desert, the buildings of which are still standing. The Arabs hide themselves in them in order to waylay travellers. Splendid well-built palaces, encircled by strong walls, are to be seen. They are generally surrounded by vaulted colonades, some of which serve the monks for dwellings. There are a few springs of fresh water, but they are rare. Thence you come to the Church of St. Menas, an immense building adorned with statues and paintings of great beauty, where lamps burn continually day and night. At the end of the building is a large marble tomb with two marble camels, and above them a man who places a foot on each of the camels, and one of his hands is open, the other closed. This statue, which is of marble, is said to represent St. Menas. In the same church are portraits of John, Zachariah, and Jesus on the inner side of a large marble column at the right of the entrance. In front of the figures is a door which is kept closed. The statue of the Virgin Mary is also to be seen covered with two curtains, and statues of all the prophets. On the exterior of the building there are figures which represent all kinds of animals and men of all callings. Among others may be distinguished a slave-dealer with a purse in his hand. In the centre of the church is an erection in the form of a cupola, under which are eight figures, if I am rightly informed, representing angels. By the side of the church is a mosque, the mihrab of which is on the south, where the Muslims come to pray. All the ground round the building is planted with fruit trees and carob-trees, from the soft sweet fruit of which syrup is prepared. Many vineyards are also to be seen, the grapes and vine of which are transported to Egypt. The town of Fustât sends every year 1000 dinârs for the maintenance of this Church."

The Church of St. Menas was apparently still standing as late as the 12th century, but the pilgrim city around it was in ruins, and the Bedouins were using the ruins as lurking places to lie in wait to plunder travellers. Incidentally, they seem to have been engaged in the same practice several hundred years later, when Muhammad 'Ali destroyed

---

(44) The famous description of the Shrine of Abû Mînâ by al-Bakrî was translated and published by the Baron de Slane in *Le Journal Asiatique* (1858), and has been quoted by Quatremère, *Mémoires Géographiques et Historiques sur l'Egypte,* I, 485. Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt,* 178. Falls, *op. cit.,* 133, De Cosson, *Mareotis,* 137. The original is an Arabic *MS.* 580, Bibl. Nationale, Paris.

(45) Tarrânah.

some of the few remaining buildings in the desert.[46]

Abû Sâlih informs us that at the time of his writing, the shrine still existed, and that it still contained the relics of the Saint.[47] By the middle of the 14th century, the relics were apparently to be found in the Church of St. Menas in Cairo. Probably it was during this period that the Shrine at Maryût succumbed to a variety of hostile circumstances, that had long been sapping its life, religious persecution and the general decline of the Coptic Church, depopulation of the Maryût district, Bedouin incursions.[48] According to the 14th and 15th Miracles in the Arabic series in *Kitâb târîkh hâyât al-shahîd al-ʿazîm mâr Mîna al-ʿadjâyibî,* attempts were made to steal the body of St. Menas from his Church in Cairo under the patriarchs Peter V and and Mark IV. The same book contains a *mîmar* describing the translation of the remains to Cairo under the Patriarch Benjamin II (1327-1339).[49]

Chronological Summary of the chief recorded events in the History of the Shrine.[50]

Emperor	*Patriarch of Alexandria*	*Event*
Constantine (306-337)		Building of first oratory.
Jovian (363-364)	Athanasius (326-373)	Building of second church.
Arcadius (395-408)	Theophilus (385-412)	Building of Basilica of Arcadius.
Zeno (474-491)	Timothy (457-477)	Endowment of shrine, garrison established.
Anastasius (491-518)		Improved accommodation for pilgrims on way to and from shrine.

---

(46) De Cosson, *Mareotis,* 61.

(47) Abû Sâlih, *loc. cit.*

(48) Drescher, *op. cit.,* xxxi.

(49) *Ibid.* According to this report, the king Mo'az sent an emir, called Falak al-Takhwî to Barqa and Pentapolis with an army. During their halt at Maryût some Arabs digging for bricks in a high *kôm* came upon a box containing human remains. By a series of miraculous manifestations these were identified as the remains of St. Menas and eventually reached his Church in Cairo.

(50) Drescher, *Apa Mena,* xxxii. These dates are not accepted by al authorities, i.e. the consecration of the second church may also have fallen into the reign of Theodosius, and the patriarchate of Theophilus.

Patriarch of Alexandria	*Event*
Michael (743-767)	Dispute about ownership of shrine with Melkites.
James (819-830)	Pilgrimages interrupted by the wars.
Joseph (831-849)	Shrine stripped of marbles and pavement.
Cosmas (851-858)	Murder at shrine, offerings seized.
Shenoute (859-880)	Bedouins lay waste shrine.

The Discovery of the Shrine of St. Menas

Almost one thousand years of silence cover the remains of this once glorious Christian metropolis. The first European traveller to visit Karm Abûm,[51] or Abû Mînâ was Mr. J.R. Pacho, who, in 1825 passed Burma[52] on his way from Abûsir to Qasr al-Qatâgî.[53] The next traveller who passed by the ancient ruins of Abû Mînâ, was Dr. W. Junkers, who mentions "Medinet el Kafirin" (City of the Pagans).[54] This site, which the Kaufmann expedition sought for so long, can only be identified with Karm Abû Mînâ.[55]

In 1904, Admiral Blomfield published an article "St. Menas of Alexandria" [56] in which he explains the use of the discovered Terra Cotta ampullae or flasks of Abû Mînâ, which according to him were formerly used as containers of the holy oil of St. Menas.[57] On the map, which

---

(51) The name was given to the ruins of Abû Mînâ by the Bedouins, Karm Abû Mînâ means "Vineyard of Father Menas."

52) The locality was also known as Bumna, so named by a Bedouin tribe of Abûm Dair.

(53) Qasr al-Qatâgi, 35 km. south of Abû Mînâ. This locality also had a church, and it is very likely, that this building belonged to the fifth century, when it was used as a place of worship for the Christian pilgrims on their way from Alexandria to the Shrine of Abû Mînâ, and further south to the Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. De Cosson, "The Desert City of El-Mûna." Pacho, *Voyage dans la Marmarique*. 10. Après cinq heures de marche, au sud-est, nous traversâmes les ruines d'un ancien bourg, nommé Boumnah, où, parmi des tas de pierres, je remarquai une construction ayant au fond une pièce cintrée, ornée de deux colonnes.

(54) Junkers, *Reisen in Afrika*, I, 25, 96.

(55) Falls, *Three Years in the Libyan Desert*, 132.

(56) Blomfield, *op. cit.*, 56.

(57) To-day, we know that the pilgrims filled their flasks with the holy water from the source of St. Menas.

is attached to Blomfield's essay, he indicates, that "the site of the Church of St. Menas and of the villages surrounding it, should be sought for in the vicinity of the red dotted lines, especially near their junction." It is now known, that Blomfield placed the supposed Shrine of St. Menas too much to the south. Actually, the junction on his map is in the immediate vicinity of Dair al-Barâmûs. The Admiral concludes his essay with a plea to the Société Archéologique d'Alexandrie, to expend some of its funds for the discovery of the ancient site.[58]

One year later, in July 1905, the German Kaufmann expedition, after searching in the Desert of the Auladali, discovered Karm Abû Mînâ.[59] A little Bedouin boy had offered to the explorers an *antica,* which was nothing less than a fine pilgrim's ampulla with the portrait of St. Menas, the camel and a Greek inscription.[60]

For two years, the Kaufmann Expedition excavated the ruins of Karm Abû Mînâ, Among the important sites which were discovered, was the Church of St. Menas, built over the tomb of the Saint. This Church, which was consecrated by the Patriarch Theophilus (385-412) during the reign of the Emperor Theodosius (379-95), was built of limestone.[61] The Church of St. Menas had three aisles with triple apses. The altar, the foundation of which is still to be seen, stood immediately over the tomb of the Saint.

When the Church of St. Menas became too small for the many pilgrims who were attracted to this holy shrine, the Emperor Arcadius built an enormous basilica, which was situated to the east of the first Church of St. Menas. The roof of this basilica was supported on fifty-six marble columns, the socles of which are still to be seen. Like the Church of St. Menas, the Church of Arcadius had three aisles. The basilica proper has a length of 60 metres, and a width of 26.50 metres. The transept has a length of 50 metres. The total length of the group of sacred buildings, comprising the basilica, the first church over the tomb of the Saint, and the baptistry, is as much as 120 metres.

---

(58) Blomfield, *op. cit.,* 73.

(59) The site of Abû Mînâ was actually identified by Mr. Ralph Carver early in 1905, and Kaufmann reaped the benefit of this discovery. (*Cf. Egyptian Gazette,* Jan. 17, 1940.)

(60) For the literature on the excavations of the Shrine of St. Menas, *cf.* Kaufmann, *Die Ausgrabung der Menas-Heiligtümer in der Mareotiswüste* (1906), *Zweiter Bericht über die Ausgrabung der Menas-Heiligtümer in der Mareotiswüste* (1907). *Dritter Bericht über die Ausgrabung der Menas-Heiligtümer in der Mareotiswüste* (1908), *Der Menastempel und die Heiligtümer von Karm Abu Mina in der Mariutwüste* (1909), *Die Heilige Stadt der Wüste* (1921).

(61) The overlapping of the dates of the patriarchate of Theophilus and the reign of Theodosius gives us A.D. 365-395 for the consecration.

The canopied altar was not in the apse, under which there are many tomb chambers, but in the middle of the transept. It was surrounded by the lattice work of the *scola cantorum* and directly behind was a semicircular tribune with seats for the clergy, in the middle of which was a special cathedra for the hegoumenos of the monks of St. Menas.[62]

A monumental baptistry was added to the western part of the church. Its ruins are from 12 to 14 metres high. The baptistry was a central building, square on the outside, and octagonal within, which reminds one of similar architectural work at Ravenna and in ancient Byzantium.[63]

The second archæological report of Kaufmann begins with the following statement : "If in regard to its traditional sources and to those furnished by the excavations, the great baptistry of the City of Menas is unique in its kind in the land of the Nile, it may be said of the monasteries, that the early Christian world has not known their like. Together with the sanctuaries, the buildings covered a space of more than 40,000 square metres."[64] This means, that a large monastery or monasteries were attached to the Shrine of St. Menas. The monks of St. Menas took care of the multitudes of pilgrims and the sick, who came to the Shrine of St. Menas to be healed of their diverse diseases. In 1906-07, the Kaufmann Expedition excavated a great portion of the monastery, cells, halls and refectories, store-chambers and other rooms of the most varied purposes. All these discoveries point to an unusually large monastic establishment in the Desert of Maryût.

Between the monasteries and the Bath of St. Menas, the hospices for pilgrims or xenodochia were situated. These ruins, however, were not excavated by the Expedition.

At the end of the systematic excavations in the summer of 1907, the Kaufmann Expedition discovered the famous Bath of St. Menas, which rounded off the picture of the sacred site as an ancient pilgrim city. By the side of a pilgrim's pool, with a surface of 150 square metres and a large deep cistern built of freestone, the Bath of St. Menas was bounded by a region under which the imperial citadel of the Emperor Zeno is to be sought. Here, another basilica, 20 metres in length and 10 metres in width, was discovered. This church, which was built in white marble, had three aisles and terminated at both

---

(62) Falls, *op. cit.*, 178.

(63) *Ibid.*

(64) Kaufmann, *Zweiter Bericht über die Ausgrabung der Menas-Heiligtümer in der Mareotiswüste.*

ends with an apse. Some baths were situated in the south aisle of the church, from where also a door led to other bathrooms, cells, and waiting rooms. In all these rooms, Kaufmann found water vessels and Menas ampullæ with an invocation to the saint. A most remarkable discovery, however, were two marble depressions in the main aisle of the church. They led up a step to a parapet in which were situated dippers' stands, by means of which the pilgrims, as to-day at Lourdes, could draw the healing water, either for their sick on the site or to take home with them.[65]

During and after the excavations, the site was visited by several scholars, dignitaries and reporters. Among the visitors were Professor Breccia of Alexandria, Col. Miralai, W.L.R. Kelham and Lady Kelham, the Duke of Connaught with his staff, and Mr. Rowland Snelling, the editor of the *Egyptian Gazette*, who went several times to the excavation grounds to supply his newspaper with details of the discoveries. Furthermore, we hear of the visits by the Société Archéologique d'Alexandrie and the Jesuit College of Alexandria. On October 15, 1912, Johann Georg, Duke of Saxony, accompanied by Professor Breccia went to the Shrine of St. Menas. His impressions, which add little to our present knowledge, are recorded in his *Streifzüge durch die Kirchen und Klöster Aegyptens*. Sixteen years later, in 1928, he went again to the Shrine of Abû Mînâ, and states that no new excavations have been undertaken since the days of the discovery of the site by Kaufmann.[66] On May 7, 1951, the excavations at the Shrine of Abû Mînâ were resumed by the Coptic Museum.[67] The work, carried out under the direction of Dr. Pahor Labib and Mr. Victor Girgis, has resulted in the discovery of several souvenir shops, glass and pottery shops, etc. I understand from Dr. Pahor Labib, that the total area of 1,600 feddans will be excavated within a not too distant future, and that by 1963, the Church of Arcadius will be reconstructed.

The New Monastery

One of the very first projects, to which Anbâ Kîrillus VI gave his fullest attention, after his enthronement as Patriarch in the Spring of 1959, was the rebuilding of the Monastery of St. Menas on the ancient site in the Desert of Maryût. The Department of Antiquities had granted fifteen feddans to the Coptic Patriarchate and on this site, which is situated 250 metres north-west of the Government Rest-House

---

(65) Falls, *op. cit.*, 181.

(66) Johann Georg, *Neue Streifzüge durch die Kirchen und Klöster Aegyptens*, 43.

(67) Labib, "Fouilles du Musée Copte à Saint-Ménas."

of Abû Mînâ, just outside the ruins of the ancient city, the ninth Coptic Monastery in Egypt will be erected.

Early in the morning, on Friday, November 27th, 1959, two convoys of cars, one starting from Cairo, the other from Alexandria, made their way to the ruins of the Shrine of St. Menas. At 8 a.m., the convoy coming from Cairo reached the site of the ruins.[68] One hour later, the convoy from Alexandria, including the cars with Anbâ Kîrillus, Anbâ Yuhannis, Bishop of Gizah, Abûnâ Mitîâs, Private Secretary to the Patriarch, and Dr. Mûnir Shûkrî, President of the Mârî Mînâ Society, arrived at the Government Rest House of Abû Mînâ. An altar was set up over the Tomb of the Saint, and the Patriarch assisted by Anbâ Yuhannis, Abûnâ Mâkârî and Abûnâ Mitîâs celebrated the Divine Liturgy. Afterwards the Patriarch drove to the site allocated by the Department of Antiquities for the building of the new Monastery of St. Menas. Then, at noon, the Patriarch laid the foundation stone of the Monastery. A dream, which had been entertained by the Patriarch for many years, had become true. After more than one millenium, the sacred site of St. Menas will again be inhabited by monks of Abû Mînâ. The following is the text on the foundation stone:

> The Monastery of Abû Mînâ Thaumaturgus,
> Its Foundation Stone was laid by the blessed hand
> of His Holiness, the Glorious Pope Anbâ Kîrillus VI,
> Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of Mark,
> and this was on the blessed Friday, the 27th of November, 1959, 17th of Hatûr, 1676 A.M.

---

(68) The Shrine of St. Menas is situated 15 km. south-eash of Burg al-'Arab, and 11 km. south of Bahig. Coming from Cairo, and travelling on the Cairo-Alexandria Desert Road, one turns 200 metres north of kilometre-stone "167" from Cairo, "48" to Alexandria, to the north-west, following the track for 25 km., passing after 20.5 km. the tomb of Shaikh Mahmûd al-Faqir.

Bell tower at Dependency of Dair Anbâ Bûlâ.

The Monastic Dependencies

THE fact that all the Coptic Monasteries are situated in the desert (with the exception of Dair al-Muharraq) necessitated the establishment of Dependencies or supply centres in an inhabited area. These Dependencies are, therefore, situated either in the fertile Nile valley or in the Delta. Generally speaking, they comprise a church, an episcopal residence, cells for the monks and a farm. It is very difficult to ascertain the history of these Dependencies, but we know that they existed at least from the 17th century. Until recently, monthly camel-caravans either from the Nile Valley or the Nile Delta would travel for days to reach the monasteries, and it is only since the fourth decade of the present century, that the camels have been replaced by trucks.

The Dependencies are important as administrative centres, since in many instances they serve as an episcopal residence. This is especially true of the Dependencies of Dair Anbâ Antúniús, Dair Anbá Búlá, Dair al-Barámûs and Dair Anbâ Bishoî. In September 1952, the Republican Law of Agrarian Reform was issued stating that no monastery was to have more than two hundred feddans, and that those monasteries with more than two hundred feddans were to be reimbursed for those feddans taken by the government. This law was applied in September 1960, when the Dair al-Muharraq, the Dair Anbâ Antúniús, the Dair Anbá Búlá and the Dair al-Barámús transferred the land above the permitted two hundred feddans to the government.

The Dependency of Dair Anbâ Antûniûs

The Dependency of the Monastery of St. Antony is situated in the town of Búsh, on the west bank of the Nile, 120 km. south of Cairo. To reach the Dependency, one passes through the town and travels 1 ½ km. in a westerly direction after leaving the main agricultural road. The present buildings date from the year 1880, and they were erected under the supervision of Abûna Yûsâb al-Antúnî. According to a tradition related by the monks, the original property of the monastery consisted of 52 feddans which was owned by the father of Anbá Antúniús in Qimmn al-'Arus, in the vicinity of al-Wasta. As years passed by, more and more property was acquired. Prior to the establishment of the present Dependency, the corn, the maize, etc. was supplied by farms in the village of al-Shanawiya.

We know that in 1672 the Monastery of St. Antony had a Dependency at Bûsh, since Wansleben visited it before going to the Desert Monastery.[1] About 60 years later, in 1730, Granger reports that the monks obtain their food from their Dependency at Bûsh.[2]

**Dependency of Dair Anbâ Anṭûnîûs.
Courtyard and cells.**

Up to 1960, the total property of the monastery consisted of 1,600 feddans, when it was reduced in accordance with the Agrarian Reform Law of the Government. The Dependency sends supplies to the Desert Monastery monthly, and the trucks follow, in most instances, the traditional caravan route via Kuraimât and through the Wâdî 'Arabah. Only in rare cases do the trucks drive via Cairo-Suez-Za'frânah. The number of monks at the Dependency changes constantly, ranging however, between 20 and 25.

The buildings of the Dependency are situated in a courtyard surrounded by a wall with an entrance on the east side. On the east side, north of the entrance is the episcopal residence, a two-story building in the usual Levantine style. The cells of the monks are arranged back

---

(1) Wansleben, *Nouvelle Relation en forme de Journal*. ., 302 f.

(2) Granger, *Relation du Voyage fait en Egypte, en l'année 1730*, 111.

onto the wall. In the south-west corner are the store-houses. In the south-east corner is situated the Church of St. Antony.

The Church of St. Antony at Bûsh was rebuilt by Abûnâ Bâsîlîûs al-Antûnî in 1878. The church has three haikals. The southern haikal is dedicated to the Archangel Michael, the central haikal to St. Antony, and the northern haikal to St. George. On the north wall of the church hangs a large picture of Anbâ Kîrillus IV. The episcopal throne, which is placed on the north side of the central aisle, is very elaborate and decorative.

The Church of St. Antony attracts many who are sick and suffering and who hope to be healed through the intercessions of St. Antony or St. George. When I visited the church, I noticed a man resting on a bench, on the south side of the church. He was suffering from "nervous rheumatism", and he had consulted many doctors who were not able to help him. A young university graduate, Mr. S.W.W., (29) of al-Wasta, had been in the church for six days, sleeping at night in the northern haikal under the icon of St. George. "My sickness is caused by the Devil, and only St. George can cast him out... I pray to St. George, and he then fights the Devil, for it is the Devil who prevents me from using and moving my arms and my legs... last night I was visited by St. George, and the pain decreased somewhat. Here is the evidence, the blood on my shirt is the blood from the icon of St. George."

The Dependency of Dair Anbâ Bûlâ

Situated in the immediate vicinity of the Dependency of Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs, about 200 metres north-west of it, is the Dependency of Dair Anbâ Bûlâ. Compared with the Dependency of the Monastery of St. Antony, that of St. Paul is unpretentious. The property extended formerly over 650 feddans, half of which was desert land, and thus difficult to cultivate. In every aspect, the Dependency of the Monastery of St.Paul does not display the prosperity of that of its sister monastery. It has been suggested that at one time the two Eastern Desert Monasteries were under the direction of one hegoumenos. This then might explain the proximity of the two dependencies.

The present buildings, comprising the episcopal residence and a few cells, were erected in or about 1875, though the present Church of St. Paul was already built in 1870. The church has three haikals of which the southern haikal is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the central haikal to Anbâ Bûlâ, the patron-saint, and the northern haikal to the Archangel Michael. The episcopal throne is placed in the northern side of the choir, and appears very simple in comparison with the throne of St. Antony's Dependency. The arrangement of the cells is the same as that in the Dependency of St. Antony.

The Dependency supplies the monastery with food and other necessities. The truck takes the route via Cairo-Suez-Za'frânah, and thus avoids the desert road which leads from Kuraimât to Za'frânah.

The Dependency of Dair al-Barâmûs

The Dependency of the Monastery of al-Barâmûs is situated at Tûkh Dalaka (at one time Tûkh an-Nasârah) in the province of Minufiya. The buildings are situated in a court-yard enclosed by a wall with the entrance on the northern side. The Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary is situated at the east end and the episcopal residence with the guest-house occupy more or less the centre. The four cells back onto the west wall, and there are storehouses along the south wall. The power station is in the south-west corner. The Dependency occupies an area of two feddans. Anbâ Makârîûs, the Bishop of the Monastery of al-Barâmûs indicated that the Dependency was first established in the 18th century. The church was built in 1876, but many renovations have been carried out since 1948 by the present bishop. The Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which is one of the three churches in the village of Tûkh Dalaka, has three haikals. The central haikal is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the northern haikal to St. George and the southern haikal to the Archangel Michael. In the southern part of the church there is the baptismal font which is separated from the gynaikion by a wooden screen dating from 1849, thus predating the actual church. The church is decorated with numerous printed sacred pictures and several icons. The icons attached to the haikal screen are, going from north to south, SS. Maximus and Domitius, an icon painted by Nicolas Theodorus of Jerusalem in 1880, St. George, the Resurrection, the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. John the Baptist and St. Michael.

At the time of my visit, in November 1959, there was only one monk, Abûnâ Mîkhâîl al-Barâmûsî, staying at the Dependency, apart from the bishop. The bishop visits the Monastery four times a year. The truck, travelling monthly to the Monastery of al-Barâmûs follows the route via Tala -Tantâ -Kafr az-Zaîyât to al-Khatâtba, and from there to the Cairo-Alexandria Rest House and the Monastery (162 km.).

In order to reach the village of Tûkh Dalaka, one drives from Cairo via Qalyûb-Benha-Quweisna-Shibin al-Kôm to al-Kôm al-Akhdar. Here, one turns east into an agricultural road and travels via al-Batanûn, at first in an easterly direction, and after 8 km., in a northerly direction to Tûkh Dalaka. (94 km.).

The Dependency of Dair Abû Maqâr

At the time when the Khedive Ismail (1863-1882) conscripted many fellahîn to work on Government projects, including the building of the Suez-Canal, Anbâ Dîmîtrîûs II, Patriarch of Alexandria, reached an agreement with the Khedive, that those fellahîn working for the monasteries should be exempted from Government service. This exemption attracted many peasants to work for the monasteries. The Dependency of the Monastery of St. Macarius profited greatly by this agreement and the present buildings were erected during this period. However, there is no doubt that the Dependency as such is older, for we learn from Thévenot of a certain village called Dris (Atrîs), "where the monks have a house." [3] Thévenot visited Atrîs in 1657. Fr. C. Siccard, who visited the village of Atrîs in 1712 found there a hospice for the monks of the desert.[4] According to Butler, who went to Atrîs in 1883, all four Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn had their Dependencies in Atrîs.[5] The Dependency which is situated in the village of Atrîs is the largest Dependency of the four Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. It has the Church of Abû Maqâr, a large building with about 20 cells, many store-rooms, a guest-house, and a farm. The buildings are situated in two separate court-yards which are connected by a passage-way.

The Church of Abû Maqâr is situated in the northern part of the main court-yard of the Dependency. The church has three haikals of which the central one is dedicated to St. Macarius, the patron-saint, the northern haikal to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the southern haikal to St. George. The icons, attached to the haikal screen represent from north to south Sitt Dimîânah and her forty virgins, two icons of the three Macarii, St. George and the Blessed Virgin Mary. An icon of the Crucifixion, painted in 1876, is placed in the niche of the central haikal. The beautiful wooden haikal screen bears the date of 1865.

The Dependency supplies the monastery once or twice a month by camel caravans travelling from Atrîs via al-Khatâtba across the desert to the Monastery of St. Macarius.

At the time of my visit, there were three monks staying at the Dependency, Abûnâ Bisharah al-Maqârî, Abûnâ Fîlûtâûs al-Maqârî and Abûnâ Girgis al-Maqârî. Of special interest to the visitor are three Doric capitals, two of which are in front of the main entrance, the third one is found in the northern court of the Dependency.

---

(3) Thévenot, *The Travels of Monsieur de Thévenot into the Levant*, I, 242.

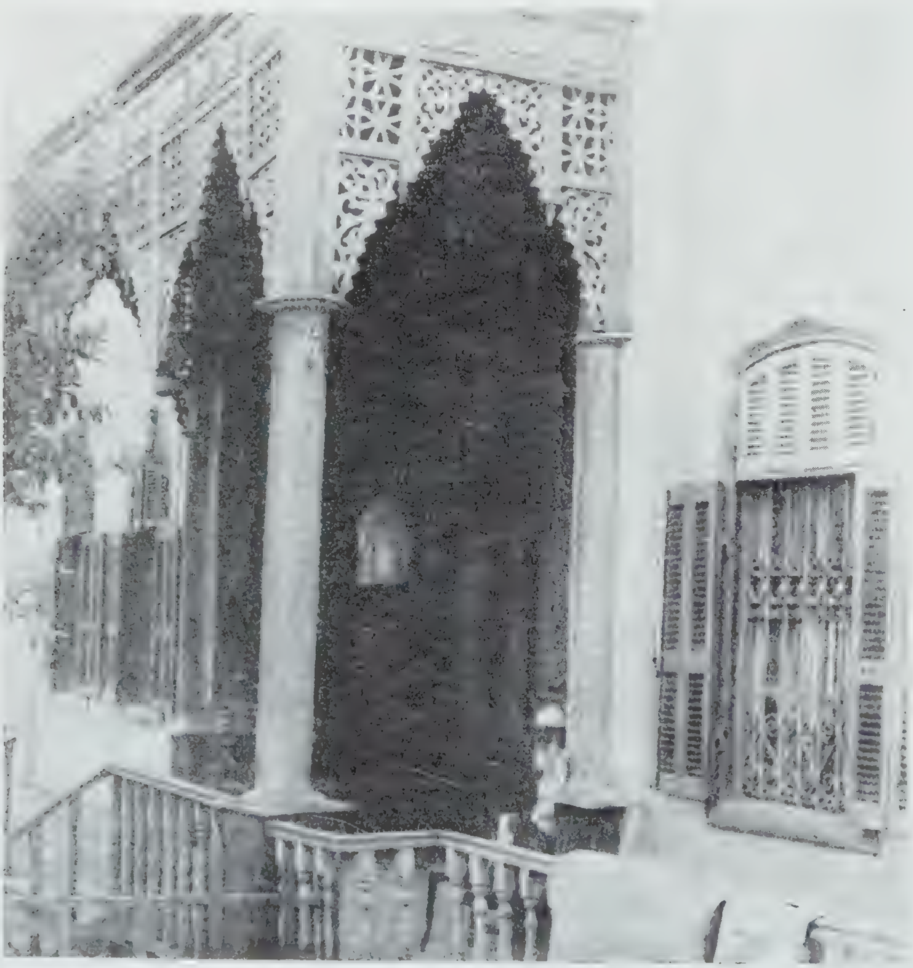
(4) Sicard, *Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses*, III, 175.

(5) Butler, *Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt*, II, 291.

To reach the Dependency of the Monastery of St. Macarius in Atrîs, one drives from Cairo north to the Muhammad 'Alî Barrages and then follows the agricultural road along the al-Muhit canal to Bânî Salâmah. From Bânî Salâmah one drives in easterly direction to Atrîs, a village situated on the Rosetta Branch of the Nile (73 km.).

The Dependency of Dair Anbâ Bishoî

The Dependency of the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî has been in the village of Kafr Dâûd since the beginning of the 19th century, when it was moved from the village of Atrîs. The Dependency consists of the



Dependency of Dair Anbâ Bishoî.
Entrance to the Guest-house.

Church of Anbâ Bishoî, the episcopal residence and guesthouse, a few cells for the monks and storage rooms.

The Church of Anbâ Bishoî was built in or around 1951, and the many wall-paintings were carried out by Abûnâ al-'Azar al-Bishoî.[6] The small church has one haikal which is dedicated to Anbâ Bishoî, the patron-saint. The episcopal throne is placed on the northern side of the central aisle. The icons in the church represent St. George, Christ, Anbâ Bishoî and St. Mark.

The Dependency, which is situated in the centre of the village is surrounded by a high wall. The supplies are taken by camel caravan from the Dependency across the desert to the Cairo-Alexandria Rest House, and from there to the Monastery, a distance of 64 km. I was told by the monks, however, that a great deal of their supplies are purchased in the stores in the village of Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. At the time of my visit, there were three monks staying at the Dependency, Abûnâ Rafâîl al-Bishoî, who is one of the oldest monks of the four Wâdî 'n-Natrûn monasteries, Abûnâ al-'Azar al-Bishoî and Abûnâ Lûqâ al-Bishoî.

To visit the Dependency, one drives from Cairo to the Muhammad 'Alî Barrages, and from there along the al-Muhit Canal via Nikhla -Bânî Salâmah -al-Khatâtba -at-Tarrâna to Kafr Dâûd (78 km.).

The Dependency of Dair as-Surîân

The Dependency of the Monastery of the Syrians, which is in the village of Atrîs, was established about 1830. Like all the other Dependencies it has a church, a guest-house, a few cells and storage facilities.

The Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary has three haikals. The central one is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the patron of the church ; the northern haikal is dedicated to St. John the Baptist, and the southern haikal to St. George. The haikal screen dates from 1871

---

(6)We know of several instances, where the monks have decorated their sanctuaries by themselves. The north haikal of the Church of Abû Makâr in the Dair Abû Maqâr was decorated by John the Limner. Some of them were professional artists before they became monks, thus we hear of Abûnâ 'Abd al-Masîh, the artist of the Cell of Saqsiq, and a monk from the Desert of St. Macarius. Abûnâ Tekla al-Habashî painted the pictures on the walls of the Chapel of the Desert Wanderers at Dair Abû Maqâr, and Qummus Girgis al-Maqârî painted the icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the north wall of the Church of St. John the Baptist in the Dair Abû Maqâr. Several icons, painted by monks hang in the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary and in the Church of St. Michael in the Dair al-Muharraq.

and was built or renewed (?) by Qummus Qaddûs as-Suriânî. Of special interest is the icon, representing St. Macarius which was painted in 1866. The baptismal font is situated on the north side of the church.

Since 1951, Abûnâ Maksîmûs as-Suriânî has served as supervisor of the Dependency. During the Second World War in 1942, Abûnâ Maksîmûs, who at that time lived at the Monastery, offered shelter in his cell to a German pilot who was shot down over the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. After a short while, however, British troops demanded that the pilot should be handed over to their custody. Staying at the Dependency with Abûnâ Maksîmûs is Abûnâ Baniâmin as-Suriânî, an old monk who, having entered the Monastery in 1917, has served the monastery for 42 years.

The Dependency is situated about one kilometre east of the Dependency of the Monastery of Abû Maqâr. It is advisable to leave one's car on the agricultural road which runs parallel to the Rosetta Branch of the Nile.

The Izbawiya

The Izbawiya is an urban Dependency of the Monastery of the Syrians, situated in close proximity to the Coptic Patriarchate in the Ezbakiah section of Cairo. The Izbawiya was built by Qummus Maksîmûs Salîb (1895/1939) to serve as an episcopal residence, as a home for sick monks and novices, and as a church for the people of the vicinity. The Izbawiya is a two storied building. On the ground floor are the guestrooms, the first story has a prayer room with numerous icons and pictures of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints, the second story has a church, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, built by Anbâ Tawfîlus, the present bishop of the monastery. A baptismal font was installed in 1956.

Until recently, Abûnâ Tîmûtâûs as-Suriânî was in charge of the Dependency, celebrating the Divine Liturgy regularly for the faithful. Opposite the main gate of the Izbawiya there is a wakf of Dair Anbâ Bûlâ, while the Monastery of Abû Maqâr maintains a wakf east of the Izbawiya.

The Dependency of Dair Anbâ Samwîl

The Dependency of the Monastery of St. Samuel is situated in the village of al-Zawara. The Dependency consists of a church, a guesthouse, and some cells and storage facilities.

The Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary has three haikals of which the central one is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the northern haikal to St. Michael, and the southern one to St. Gabriel. Some modern icons of St. Menas, SS. Maximus and Domitius, SS. Peter and Paul, St. Takla Haymanot, St. Samuel, St. Michael, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Baptism of Christ and the Resurrection adorn the sanctuary.

Dependency of Dair Anbâ Samwîl.

West of the church are the stables for the camel and four donkeys which are employed to send provisions to the Dair Anbâ Samwîl. The hegoumenos, Abûnâ Mînâ as-Samwîlî, resides at the Dependency.

To visit the Dependency one drives from Cairo on the main agricultural road south to Maghagha, and from there westwards through the Nile valley to the village of Bânî Wâllîms. The Dependency, which is situated at the north-western end of al-Zawara can only be reached on foot from Bânî Wâllîms (2.5 km). It is advisable to park one's motorcar in the hospital yard at Bânî Wâllîms.

Epilogue

We have now reached the end of our study of Coptic Monasticism, and in it we have traced the long and distinguished history of the Coptic Church. At one time, the total number of monks in Egypt may well have surpassed half a million. This almost astronomical number is partly substantiated by the reports of contemporaries. Rufinus (372) claims to have known of 10,000 monks in the Fayyûm alone, whilst Palladius (387) speaks of 5,000 monks in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. The establishment of Anbâ Bakhûm in Tabennese comprised 3,000 monks, whilst that of Anbâ Abûlû in Bawit, near Asyût numbered 5,000 monks at the beginning of the seventh century. John of Petra (550) speaks of 3,500 Fathers in the Desert of Scetis, and St. Jerome judged the number of monks in Egypt to be 50,000, whilst Cassian gives an estimate of 5,000. In Nikiou, in Lower Egypt, at the beginning of the seventh century, we hear of 700 hermits distributed all over the district, without counting other religious communities, and under Anbâ Shanûdah at the White Monastery, there were 2,200 monks, a number which undoubtedly increased. At Oxyrhynchus, 10,000 monks are reported to have lived, of whom 5,000 stayed in the city, whilst the others resided in the suburbs.

Nothing is gained by comparing these figures, or even by trying to prove their historical veracity. One thing is certain, and that is, that Coptic monasticism was a decisive force in the Egyptian national life.

Apart from the number of the monks there is another point which is worth noticing. This is the ecumenical character of Coptic monasticism. Thus, St. Jerome informs us of a large number of Latins, who could be found in the monasteries of the Thebaid, and we are informed in the *Vita Pachomii* that at Pabau, there was a special house for Greek, Roman and other foreign Christians. In the 12th century, at least five different national communities were represented in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, Egyptian, Armenian, Syrian, Ethiopian, and Nubian.

Furthermore, there is evidence for believing that the national groups enjoyed intimate relation, that is, that they came together for convocations on the great festivals in commemoration of the Saints of Scetis.

This international and ecumenical background is important, especially in our days, when Christianity in particular, and Religion in general, is confronted by a World of materialism, for only by concerted effort and working in an eirenic spirit can the Church overcome the world.

The growing interest and concern of Christians from all parts of the world in the Coptic Church can be seen from the increasing number of visitors to the monasteries and the increasing amount of literature dealing with the subject of Coptic monasticism. This may certainly prove to be a blessing, since thereby the virtues of Desert Monasticism can find a means to radiate into the world. For the Desert spells quietness and peace, in which the Presence of God can be felt more easily than in the noisy and turbulent world.

The reader of this study of Past and Present Monasticism will most probably ask, what of the future of Coptic Monasticism? If in the fifth and sixth centuries the strength of monasticism in Egypt was a matter of quantity, its strength in the twentieth century lies in quality, and from this point of view, there appears to be sufficient evidence to state that for the present and for the immediate future Coptic Monasticism has a sounder and more stable basis than it ever had before. From the point of view of the Divine Economy, the future of Coptic Monasticism as well as that of the Church is fully assured by the promise of Him who said: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the consummation of the ages."

System of Transliteration Used in this Work

In this work no special form has been given to the strong consonants in Arabic.

d = both د and ض
h = ,, ح ,, ه
s = ,, س ,, ص
t = ,, ت ,, ط
z = ,, ز ,, ظ

The following letters are given special form:

dh = ذ
g = ج
kh = خ
sh = ش
gh = غ
q = ق
w = و (consonantal)
y = ى (consonantal)

The following signs have been used.

’ = ء eg. Wâdî ’n-Natrûn.
‘ = ع eg. Sa‘d.

APPENDIX I

THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL OF MONKS

The Theological School of Monks (Madrassat al-Ruhban al-Lahutîya) is situated at 12 Sharia Sabet Pasha, Helwan.

It was founded by the Patriarch Anbâ Yûânnis XIX in 1930, and Qummus Mikhâîl Mînâ al-Barâmûsî was appointed to be its first director. From 1930 to 1956[1] the Theological School trained many monks. From 1956 to October 1959, however, it was closed. The present director is Qummus Aghabîûs al-Barâmûsî, a nephew of Qummus Mikhâîl, who was appointed in October 1959. There are at the time of writing (1960), ten monks who are enrolled in the Theological School, and they come from five different monasteries,[2] though in previous years up to thirty monks have resided at one time on the premises.

The teaching-staff comes from the Theological Seminary in Cairo (Al-Kub al-Aklîrîkîah), and includes Dr. Mawrîs Tâûdrus (Biblical Exegesis), Mr. 'Abd al-Masih Gayet (Arabic), Mr. Shâker Bâsîlîûs (Coptic), Mr. Fûâd Bâsîlî (Homiletics), 'Aziz Shahâtah (Hymnology), Qummus Antûnîûs al-Barâmûsî (Church-History), Abûnâ 'Abd al-Mariam al-Habashî (Ethiopic), Mr. Fawzî (Chemistry). The course of study covers a period of five years.

The site of the Theological School for Monks covers an area of four feddans. The Church of al-'Adhrâ, which serves the Coptic community of Helwan as well as the monks, was built in 1897 by Abûnâ Mikhâîl al-Maqârî, and was enlarged and redecorated in 1932 by Qummus Mikhâîl al-Barâmûsî. The church has two haikals. The central haikal is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the northern haikal to St. George. South of the central haikal is the Baptistry. The icons are all modern. The Episcopal Residence is situated opposite to the entrance of the church. The Educational Building comprises four class rooms, one hall, one office and a library with approximately 250 volumes. Furthermore, there are five separate one-story buildings for the monks, the kitchen and refectory.

After a candidate has entered a monastery, he may be sent by the monastery to the Theological School. The monastery, however, bears all the expenses for the monk, and pays to the School L.E. 100 annually for each monk. During the vacations, the monks return to their respective monasteries.

---

(1) Qummus Mikhâîl died on August 17, 1956.

(2) From Dair al-Barâmus: Abûnâ Gâûrgîûs, Abûna Mûsâ; from Dair as-Surîân: Abûnâ Murqus, Abûnâ Aghathûn; from Dair al-Muharraq: Abûnâ Buqtur, Abûnâ Tawfîlus, Abûnâ Dâûd, Abûnâ Aghabîûs, and Abûnâ Damîân al-Bishoî and Abûnâ Shanûdah al-Maqâri.

APPENDIX II

MOTIVES FOR WHICH MEN BECOME MONKS IN EGYPT

A question which is often asked by people is what are the motives which compel some men to join the community of a desert monastery, and in some instances, to retire even into a cave to live. There are numerous reasons which can be put forward which may have caused one or the other monk to retire from the world. In most cases, however, one should remember that more than one reason may have been responsible for this decision.

THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

A religious experience is one of the most frequent reasons for determining the future of a man's life. This experience may come about in the form of a vision, a dream, or an inspiration which results from contemplation or ecstacy. The case of St. Macarius the Great offers us a good example. One night, when he was in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, as camel driver, an angel showed him a vision of the inner valley and promised to him, that it would be a place of dwelling for his followers. Soon after this experience, St. Macarius distributed his goods among the poor and entered upon the ascetic life.

THE SENSE OF GUILT

A profound sense of guilt has led many people to a life of asceticism in the hope that by good works, such as renunciation, prayer, meditation and fasting they may atone in this world for their sins. A good example of this type is the case of Moses the Robber, an Ethiopian, who had been a slave. His master had dismissed him as being insubordinate. He then became a robber, perhaps even a murderer, until he heard of the great ascetes of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. He met both St. Isidore and St. Macarius, and subsequently became one of the first monks in the Desert of Scetis. It is difficult, if not impossible, to know the percentage of young men who are led to the monastic life on account of feelings of guilt or from a sense of the necessity of atonement.

THE TEACHING OF THE GOSPEL

The first of the Desert Fathers, St. Antony the Great, was moved to his decision on hearing the teaching of the Holy Scripture. When one day he heard the text : "If thou will be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast and give to the poor", *(St. Matthew* 19: 21) he sold all that he had, and retired to a cave. It is true that a large number of candidates are recruited for the monasteries by monks working in town and country churches. The Biblical teaching that is given in the Coptic Churches lays great stress on the ascetic demands of Christ and His Apostles. Furthermore, the great esteem which the Copts have for the Gospel strengthens its ethical and ascetic precepts.

EXAMPLE

For those who are members of the Churches of Apostolic foundation, the monastic and ascetic life is considered to be spiritually and morally superior to that lived in the world. The monks, who are frequently referred to in the past as Angels of God, are regarded, therefore, with great respect. To follow their example is thought by many to be a surer way to eternal salvation than by remaining in this world. Individual monks who have radiated a deep spirituality, have attracted others to follow them. The best example in our days is the influence that Abûnâ Mattâ al-Mâskîn had upon a number of young university graduates in Alexandria whom he frequently met, until several of them followed him to the monastery and finally to the cave.

IDENTIFICATION WITH THE CHURCH

For those who take their faith seriously, to enter a monastery is considered proof of their sincerity. The total identification of the person with the church, as it takes place in the monastery, has a special significance where the church represents the faith of a religious minority. It is not surprising, therefore, to find businessmen, lawyers, and other professionals among the desert fathers.

AMBITION

Since the Canon Law of the Coptic Church requires that the patriarch or the bishop be chosen from among the monks, there may be cases where a man embraces the monastic life out of a desire for leadership. Such men, therefore, regard the monastic life as a means rather than as an end.

PROTEST

The purist is a person who is dissatisfied with what he considers the worldliness of the Church, and in order to save his soul, he either withdraws to the monastery to live a life of religious certitude, or he will see to it that his withdrawal is interpreted as a kind of protest against this worldliness.

ECONOMIC AND ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS

There is no doubt, that in some instances, economic difficulties as well as a desire to escape from the responsibilities of life have led men to become monks or ascetes. Furthermore, there are always people, who fail to find satisfaction and fulfilment in the course of ordinary life. Their behaviour and their attitudes may be regarded as no fitting into the general environment, whilst, on the other hand, they are quite socially acceptable within the monastic community. Therefore, we see that it is not right to evaluate one social pattern by the standards and categories of another social pattern.

THE CHOICE OF A MONASTERY

A religious experience of the person or of his family may well determine the particular monastery which he intends to enter. Since many such experiences are connected in one way or another with Saints, the person may express his gratitude for blessings or healings by entering the monastery of that particular Saint. Those who have received comfort and help from St. Antony, enter the Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs, whilst those who have been consoled by Anbâ Bishoî, would enter the monastery that bears his name.

Another determining factor in the choice of the monastery is the family relationship that a person may have with the monks of a particular monastery. Young men who hear from members of their family or from friends about a certain monastery, may also be influenced to join that monastery.

The geographical situation of the monastery is an important factor that should not be overlooked. Though this was more important in years gone by, we still discover that the monasteries attract their candidates from the province in which they or their dependencies are situated.

The practice of collecting alms is still observed by the monks of the various monasteries. This enables the monks to establish contacts in the world, and, at the same time, to bring their monastery to the attention of prospective candidates.

One of the most important factors in the choice of the monastery is the type of life and discipline which the respective monastery offers to its monks. It is well known that the Coptic monasteries do not all have the same standard of spiritual discipline. Thus, we find that the Monastery of the Syrians and the Monastery of St. Samuel offer the most austere type of monastic life. Every monk has his particular responsibilities, apart from the contemplative life. The Monastery of al-Barâmûs and the Monastery of Anbâ Bûlâ strive to follow the above mentioned monasteries in terms of spiritual discipline. The Monastery of Abû Maqâr accepts novices only in very rare cases. This means, that each monastery has its own so-called individuality and the prospective monk chooses the monastery according to his estimation of what the monastic life ought to be.

Once a person has joined a monastery, he becomes a novice until he is initiated into monasticism. There are, generally speaking, two types of novices. Those of whom the monastery has some previous knowledge, that is, those who may have worked as Sunday School teachers, or who may have been engaged in other work of interest to the Church, and those, of whom nothing is known to the monastic authorities.

The length of the period of the novitiate depends entirely upon the personality of the novice. There is no rule or regulation regarding the period of probation. Upon the recommendation of the *amin ad-dair* (sub-hegoumenos), the bishop decides in each and every case, when a novice is sufficiently advanced in the spiritual life to be initiated into monasticism.

Young men who wish to enter a monastery, must have completed their military service, or to be in the possession of an official exemption. The Government of the United Arab Republic does not exempt monks from military service, if they are of age to serve with the armed forces. This means that those who enter a monastery are much older than they used to be. According to the present law, men are exempted from military service after having attained the age of 28.

The bishop is empowered to accept any layman who applies to enter the monastery, provided, that he is unmarried, or a widower. Every candidate should submit a written application, stating his name, occupation, age and home town. Thereupon, the bishop may accept him temporarily, until the investigation regarding the candidate has been completed.

Those who have a wife and children, or parents who cannot support themselves, are not to be admitted. The same is true of persons who have committed a crime, or who are under trial and come to the monastery to avoid the consequences of their deeds. Furthermore, those who are suffering from a contagious disease or who are feeble-minded are not accepted.

The novices are to be carefully examined as to their real aim and intention. They should manifest humility and forbearance, and should subject themselves to the laws of monasticism. They should memorize the Psalms and the Psalmodia, and should engage in study. A confessor is assigned to the novice who will further his spiritual progress.

APPENDIX III

APPOINTMENTS IN COPTIC MONASTICISM

Every society, including that of a monastery, depends upon certain appointed positions held by some of its members. These positions are essential for the smooth working of the monastic community. They have developed over a period of almost 1600 years. Thus, these positions have acquired a status within the monastic structure that make them an integral part of the monastic life.

THE BISHOP

The bishop (al-Usquf) of the monastery, who is the hegoumenos, is in charge of the spiritual, administrative and financial affairs. He is responsible for the observance of law and order, and he himself should be a guiding example in both word and deed. He is appointed to his office by the Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark. It is within his power to create positions according to need. The episcopal residence is normally the dependency of the monastery. Therefore, the bishops of Dair Anbâ Antûnîûs and Dair Anbâ Bûlâ reside in Bûsh, while the bishops of the monasteries of Anbâ Bishoî and al-Barâmûs live in their respective dependencies in the Delta. The bishop of the Monastery of St. Macarius resides at Asyût, as he is at the same time Metropolitan of Asyût. The bishop of the Monastery of the Syrians spends most of his time either in the monastery itself or in the residence of the monastery at Cairo, the Izbawiya. The only bishop to live all the time within the monastery is the bishop of the Dair al-Muharraq. The reason for this is because of the location of the monastery. It is situated on the edge of the fertile Nile valley, and its farms are in its immediate vicinity. The Monastery of Anbâ Samwîl is without a bishop.

The bishops who reside in the dependencies of the monasteries visit their monasteries at least three times a year.

THE SUB-HEGOUMENOS

The sub-hegoumenos (Amîn ad-dair) is the resident representative of the bishop in all matters concerning the spiritual, administrative and financial affairs of the community. He should be an energetic person, zealous, honest, and a good business manager. He should have stayed long enough in the monastery to be acquainted with the various aspects of organization. The sub-hegoumenos is appointed by the bishop with the consent of the monks. His responsibilities are very inclusive. He is to supervise the spiritual life and the manual work of the monks, and to look after the sick and the aged. He is the examiner of the candidates who wish to enter the monastery. Furthermore, he is responsible for the buildings, the furniture, the library, the antiquities and any other valuable utensils of historical value. The sub-hegoumenous is the monastic officer responsible for the gate. He gives permission to the doorkeeper (Hâris al-Bab) to allow visitors, monks or laymen, to enter the monastery. He extends the hospitality of the monastery by inviting the visitors to the guestrooms, and he does everything for their comfort, to show them the churches, the ancient buildings and the antiquities. Another responsibility of the sub-hegoumenos is the registration of all monks of his monastery. In a special book, the name, the age, the home town, the date of entry, the date of ordination, the promotions and accomplishments of the monks are recorded. Another file is kept for all incoming and outgoing correspondence.

Decisions dealing with policy matters should, however, be referred by the sub-hegoumenos to the bishop. In some monasteries a rotating system is used, in which the office of the sub-hegoumenos is annually transferred to another monk. This apparently democratic method suffers, however, from some very real psychological problems. In a situation in which all monks have been sub-hegoumenos at one time or the other, it is not always easy for the sub-hegoumenos in office to demand respect and obedience. The spiritual welfare of the monks is in the hands of the confessor (Abb al-'Itiraf) who is appointed by the bishop. He should be a pious and dignified monk, with many years of monastic experience. It is desirable that the confessor be an older person. Generally speaking, a monk does not change his confessor, except in cases of travelling. The number of monks that one confessor has depends largely upon the personality of the confessor. If the sub-hegoumenos should be suitable for the position of the confessor, he may be the only confessor in a smaller monastery.

THE STOREKEEPER

The storekeeper (al-Makhzangî) ought to be a monk who is acquainted with the value of the things entrusted to him. He should not give out anything that is under his custody without the explicit permission of the sub-hegoumenos. It is his responsibility to pay attention to perishable provisions.

THE LIBRARIAN

The librarian (Amin al-Maktabah) should be an intelligent and widely read monk, familiar with the books and manuscripts entrusted to his care. All books in the library should be registered in two copies, one of which should be kept with the sub-hegoumenos and the other in the library. The librarian should arrange the books according to subject matter, so as to make them easily available to those who want to use them. In case certain books or manuscripts are in need of repair, the librarian should request the sub-hegoumenos to have them sent to the binder. The librarian should permit the monks to read whatever they wish. All books taken out of the library are to be registered and no book is to go out longer than for one month. Neither the sub-hegoumenos nor the librarian are permitted to allow any book out of the monastery without the permission of the bishop.

THE SACRISTAN

The Sacristan (al-Kanasî) should be a monk who is well acquainted with the Liturgy of the Church and the order of the service. It is his responsibility to arrange the books for use in the church throughout the year. Furthermore, he should light the candles and the lamps. He should supervise the cleanliness of the church, and notify the sub-hegoumenos in case of damage to church property, and he is responsible for its replacement. The sacristan is also in charge of the list which gives the order in which the monks are to celebrate the Divine Liturgy throughout the year.

THE DOORKEEPER

The doorkeeper (Hâris al-Bab) should be a friendly and hospitable person. He should be humble and answer every knock at the door. Every visitor should be treated politely, and in accordance with the rank. The doorkeeper should never open the door without the permission of the sub-hegoumenos. A stranger visiting the monastery should not be permitted to enter the cells of the monks. The doorkeeper on meeting visitors, should not violate the accepted customs with regard to offering food and drink. He should not discuss matters concerning the world with visitors, furthermore, he should not receive money or gifts without permission.

OTHER POSITIONS

Further positions in the monastery are those of the cantor or psaltist (al-Murattil) who is almost invariably a blind monk, the servant of the congregation (Khâdim al-Magma‘), the steward of the Qurbân or the Eucharistic Loaf (al-Qarabnî) who is responsible for the baking of the Eucharistic Loaf according to the tradition of the Coptic Church, and the steward of the bread (al-Mushrif ‘ala al-Khubz). In some monasteries monks are appointed to be in charge of the printing press, the water pump, etc. These and several other positions are of recent origin.

APPENDIX IV

CERTAIN ROLES WHICH HAVE BEEN ASSUMED IN COPTIC MONASTICISM

Apart from the assigned positions which certain monks have within the framework of Coptic monasticism, some monks assume or have assumed roles which are neither official nor assigned. These roles are based on talent, interest or vocation, rather than on position. This means that a monk may "enact" a role, but he can never "occupy" a role. The term "role" is here used with the meaning of a set of modes of behaviour which are thought of as constituting a definite unit. Thus, some monks, apart from their roles as members of a monastic community, enact the role of prophet, shepherd, priest, scholar, etc. These roles do not necessarily imply intrinsic superiority or inferiority from the point of view of monasticism. It means, however, that some monks possess qualities and gifts, which others may lack.

THE ORIGINATOR

The founders of the great centres of asceticism in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, the Wâdî 'Arabah, the Desert of Qalamûn, and elsewhere, belong to this category. These men were more than teachers or prophets, they became founders of large Christian communities by the influence which their personalities and activities exercised upon their followers. Saints like Antony the Great, Macarius the Great, Pachomius, John the Short and Pishoi belong to this group, they were Saints who have left an indelible impression upon the life of the Church and Monasticism. Characteristic of their mission is the close association of their message with their personality and their way of life. The idea of vocation, which all these Saints shared, implied a consciousness of its mandatory character. Though Christian asceticism did not begin with either St. Antony or St. Macarius, nevertheless, they were the originators and the builders of a way of life to be followed. Of the two contributions that the Egyptian Church made to Christendom, monasticism was the most genuine and powerful one. [1]

THE REFORMER

"In times of threatening decay or disintegration leaders arise in religious groups who are difficult to classify in the traditional historical schemes. They are not on one level with the founders, their creative religious power does not match that of the originator..." [2]

When abuses crept into the practice of the Christian Faith, there were always found reformers who by their wise judgment and counsel corrected such abuses and restored the faith to its inherent purity.

The classical example of such a reformer in Coptic Monasticism is Anbâ Shanûdah (Shenoute). Apart from his contribution as an original writer to Coptic ecclesiastical literature, Anbâ Shanûdah was a reformer against abuses which had arisen among the Christians in Egypt. For a period of fifteen years he served as hegoume-

---

(1) The other contribution was the philosophical study of the Christian faith in the Cathechetical School of Alexandria.

(2) Wach, *Sociology of Religion*, 344.

nos of Dair Anbâ Shanûdah, where he corrected and punished insubordinate monks by severe beatings, and we hear that on one occasion at least one monk died from the severity of this discipline. The history of Anbâ Shanûdah is full of descriptions revealing the disciplinary nature of this man. In 431 A.D., he attended the ecumenical Council at Ephesus, where he became known for his violent attitude towards the Antiochene monk Nestorius.

The Middle Ages produced numerous outstanding reformers. The canons of four of them form part of the Canon Law of the Coptic Church. Anbâ Akhristûdulûs (1048), 66th Patriarch of Alexandria, wrote thirty-one canons to correct abuses which had arisen in the church. The same is true of the thirty-four canons of Anbâ Kîrillus II, 67th Patriarch of Alexandria (1086). The laity was admonished to lead a more virtuous life in obedience to the laws and practices of the Church. Again and again reference is made to the practice of simony, the besetting sin of patriarchs and bishops. A study of the Canons of the Middle Ages is instructive in so far, as they reflect the conditions of the Church and the need for reform.

The specific contributions of the reformer vary. They differ in creative power and breadth of vision, in scope and persuasiveness. Some of these reformers display their zeal for the due observance of rites and ceremonies, others excel as intellectual and moral guides. Some of these influential figures lived retired and secluded lives, radiating, as it were, a power which generated changes and transformations in the religious community of their time.

Over the centuries, many long established practices have been restated and corrected and it is impossible to list all the monks, bishops and patriarchs who have concerned themselves with the work of correction. Butrus Mitfah al-Antûnî (d. 1875) was concerned with reforming the practice of monastic fasting, that is, shortening the long and frequent fasts. As a reviver of an ancient school of monasticism, Anbâ Kîrillus VI belongs to the illustrious company of the reformers. The coenobitic form of ascetic life as promulgated by St. Pachomius in the 4th century was reintroduced through the spiritual and administrative charisma of the present Pope. This coenobitic-ascetic way of life found its fullest expression at Dair Anbâ Samwîl, under the leadership of Abûnâ Mattâ al-Maskîn and is presently observed at Dair as-Surîân under the leadership of Anbâ Tawfîlus.

THE PRIEST

The authority of the priest is derived from his ordination to the priesthood whereby he is empowered to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, to administer the Sacraments of Baptism and Penance, and to perform certain other specific acts, such as the blessing of animate and inanimate objects, the expounding of the Holy Scriptures and the precepts of the Church, etc., albeit, this authority is, strictly speaking delegated to him from the bishop who in early times was the sole administrator of the Sacraments and the approved interpreter of Holy Scriptures and Tradition. The priesthood is, therefore, an official order which sets apart the recipient. To this Order some monks gladly accede, whilst others refrain from receiving it, fearing lest, so they maintain, that thereby they may lose their *prophetic charisma*. A classical example of this fear of receiving Holy Orders is given by Palladius, where he says: "They say concerning Abba Apos, who afterwards became Bishop of Oxyrhyncus, that, when he was a monk, he laboured with great toil in the ascetic life, and that he was moved every hour by Divine Grace, but that after he became bishop, though he wished to perform the same labours, he was not able to do so. And he cast himself before God, and made supplication unto Him, saying: 'Peradventure, O my Lord, it is because of the Bishopric that Thou hast removed Thy grace from me'..." [3]

Many of the finest and most spiritual monks in the monasteries in the twentieth century are not ordained to the priesthood, either because they feel themselves unworthy to stand before the altar and to celebrate the Holy Mysteries, or out of fear of losing their gifts through receiving this Order.

On the other hand, there are monks to whom the priesthood, that is to say, the Service of the Altar, is the most essential part in their spiritual life and the most natural application of their monastic ideal. The life of Peter the Presbyter illustrates how a monk, after much reluctance on his part, was ordained to the priesthood, after which he performed the Morning and Evening Offering of Incense and celebrated the Divine Liturgy every day.

There are several monks who are, in the true sense of the word, priests, not only because of their priestly orders, but also on account of their natural propensity to the priestly office. Abûnâ Timûtâûs as-Surîânî served for many years the Church in the Izbawiya, Cairo, and it is said of him that he could not live without his prayers and celebrations at the altar. In the Monastery of St. Macarius we have Abûnâ Mîkhâîl al-Maqârî, who sometimes chants and prays all night and day; and of Abûnâ Bûlus al-Barâmûsî it is said, that he lives the priestly life, as if it were the most natural life to him. The same can also be said of Anbâ Kîrillus VI, who for the last thirty years has celebrated the Divine Liturgy daily, and to whom the priestly function is an integral part of his spiritual life.

THE PROPHET

As we have already said, Coptic monasticism is characterized by its asceticism, mysticism and sacerdotalism. Few people will admit that the prophetic office also is found among the Desert Fathers. Already in the fourth century, Palladius bears witness to this. On a certain day he happened to meet Paphnutius who was "such a gentle man that his meekness overcame the gift of prophecy which was found with him; now the former (his meekness) was voluntary, and the latter (his gift of prophecy) was an act of Divine Grace." [4] The prophetic charisma implies immediate communion with God, and the intensity of it may even be more significant than its continuance. The prophet is conscious of being the instrument, the mouthpiece of the Divine Will, though the Coptic prophet, in addition to this, is always aware of the fact that he is at the same time, a "slave", a "servant", or a "miserable creature". This point is important to remember, when one evaluates some of the radical remarks of a man such as Abûnâ 'Abd al-Masîh al-Habashî, a solitary who lives in a cave in the vicinity of the Monastery of al-Barâmûs, and is a prophet according to his own way of thinking. His sharp criticism of the institutionalism of the church results from a conviction that the spiritual life is of necessity opposed to the institutionalized life, that the world is evil and doomed to destruction, and that any contact with the world is harmful to the spirituality one may have acquired. It is said that when the Ethiopian Bishop of Harrar and the Ethiopian Ambassador

---

(3) Palladius, *The Paradise of the Fathers*, II, 9.

(4) Palladius, *op. cit.*, I, 175.

at Cairo once went to the desert to see him, he refused to meet them, partly out of fear to be contaminated by the presence of those of the world, partly by a sensitivity of his unworthiness to be regarded as a man of God.

The prophetic character of the anchorites may occasionally be so anti-ecclesiastical, that the prophet no longer avails himself of the ministry and the sacraments of the Church. He achieves communion with God without the ecclesiastical Means of Grace, thus he cuts off himself from the fellowship of the living Church.

By nature, the desert prophet is an isolated person and the radius of his message is limited to his disciples. He does not address himself to the nation in the sense of the classical Old Testament prophets. He is more passive, and thus might fall rather into the category of the "seer". Though certain of his mission, he, nevertheless, stresses his humility, an attitude comparable to that of St. John the Baptist who said : "...even He Who comes after me, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." (*John* 1:27)

THE SCHOLAR

It has been said that the so-called anti-intellectualism of Coptic monasticism may be due to the non-intellectual activity of its founder, a view which is supported by St. Athanasius who is quoted as saying that St. Antony did not take to schooling.[5] A story is told that once a philosopher who came to see St. Antony said to him : "Father, how do you hold up, deprived as you are of the solace of books ?" But St. Antony replied : "My book, philosopher, is Nature, and thus I can read God's language at will."

The scholar is a person with vision, insight and a creative ability, who places his thoughts at the disposal of others. His primary concern is an intellectual endeavour to discover truth. It is true that Coptic monasticism has always been more contemplative and passive in character than Western monasticism. At the same time, however, it has not lacked the scholastic impulse. Indeed, the ancient Egyptian Church has provided many illustrious and well-educated scholars. Palladius informs us, that, by the side of Chronius, there used to dwell a certain man who was called James the Lame, and he was an exceedingly learned man. Also Paphnute, who possessed the gift of knowledge to such a degree that he knew how to expound the books of the Old Testament and New Testament without reading from them.[6] Anbâ Shanûdah may be regarded as the most eminent of the ancient Coptic scholars. Using the dialect of his own district of Atripe, he made this the recognized literary medium of Egypt for the following four centuries. His writings in form of letters, homilies and rules, made a profound impression upon the life of the monasteries and the Coptic Church.

Every age, however, produced its scholars, and in the seventh century, monks such as John of Nikiu and Menas of Pschati engaged in the scholastic pursuit. One of the famous nineteenth century scholars was Abûnâ 'Abd al-Masîh ibn Girgis al-Barâmûsî, who provided for the Egyptian Church a text of dogmatic theology. He engaged in

---

(5) This might merely indicate that St. Antony did not receive the kind of rhetorical and humanistic training which was usually given to the sons of parents which were as comfortably situated as those of St. Antony.

(6) Palladius, *op. cit.*, I, 75.

apologetic writings and was known as a famous theologian. Just as important was his nephew, Abûnâ ‘Abd al-Masîh ibn Salîb al-Mas'udî al-Barâmûsî, who was well versed in Coptic, Syriac, Ethiopic, Greek and English. He served for many years as librarian of the libraries of the four monasteries in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn.

At the middle of the twentieth century, every monastery has produced its scholars. At the Monastery of al-Barâmûs we find Abûnâ Antûnîûs al-Barâmûsî, who is a teacher of Church-History at the Theological Seminary at Cairo, Abûnâ Aghâbîûs al-Barâmûsî who is the head-master of the Theological School for Monks at Helwan and Abûnâ Quzmân al-Barâmûsî who is noted for his knowledge of the Coptic language. At the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoî, Abûnâ Ibrâhîm al-Bishoî began writing a dictionary of the Coptic language. On account of his blindness, however, he was forced to pursue his studies in braille. At the Monastery of al-Muharraq, several monks are known for their scholastic interests. Abûnâ Quzmân al-Muharraqî has acquired a wide reading knowledge, and a clear perspective of theological and philosophical issues.

The most profound scholar among the monks of our days is, without doubt, Abûnâ Antûnîûs as-Suriânî, who, for many years, has worked in the fields of Coptic Church-History and Canon Law. As a solitary, he lives in a cell a few kilometres from the Monastery of the Syrians.

THE SCRIBE

Just as the criterion of the scholar is his independent zeal for research, his concern for the discovery of truth in his respective field of study, so that of the scribe, who represents more the passive type, is his concern to preserve the works of the past and to make them available to future generations. His role is both important and essential in an institution which holds fast to tradition, and sees its ideal type in the past.

The forerunner of the scribe in Coptic Monasticism was the "memorizer." His role was to memorize the sayings and the traditions of the Desert Fathers, so that they might be handed down to future generations of monks. The stories of the Desert Fathers provide ample evidence that memorization was the general method by which oral traditions were passed on from generation to generation.

The scribes used various styles of writing for the copying out of manuscripts. There is, for example, the Cursive Style in which letters are ligatured, which we may term nowadays handwriting. It was used mainly for private correspondence and contracts. The Uncial or more rigid style with separately spaced letters was used for texts which were intended for public reading, and had, therefore, to be clear and easily legible, the printed text of to-day. Finally, we have the ornate calligraphic book-script with finely proportioned letters, which was used for what we might call "éditions de luxe" of the Holy Scriptures.

Every generation had its scribes. Among the famous scribes of the sixth century was Ephraem, who lived at the Dair Anbâ Shanûdah at Atripe, and copied out the rules and precepts of Anbâ Shanûdah. Once, he placed some of these copies in jars and sent them to the Monastery of Abû Masis. When, on one occasion, the supplies of vegetables ran short in that monastery, the monks opened the jars, expecting to find therein preserves, but instead, they found the copies of the rules of Anbâ Shanûdah, which they read with much edification.

Sometimes, the scribe was also an illuminator who decorated the Sacred Texts with coloured ornamentation, the purpose of which was, at least at the beginning, to direct the reader's attention to the titles of the book. Coptic sacred texts often show elaborate designs and arrangements of spirals, buds, twigs, leaves, flowers, birds, fishes and food-baskets. A famous calligrapher and illuminator of the ninth century was Abûnâ Zakharia as-Samwîlî, who copied out several Synaxary lections for the Monastery of St. Michael in the Desert. One of the most illustrious calligraphers and illuminators of the present century was Anbâ Makarîûs III, the 114th Patriarch of Alexandria. A copy of several hundred calligraphic designs of crosses and Coptic letters is kept in the library of Dair Anbâ Bishoî.

The printing press, however, has largely replaced the functional importance of the scribe, yet, even in our days, we hear of monks who are engaged in the copying out of the Sacred Texts which are used for divine worship. Abûnâ Shanûdah al-Barâmûsî has copied out numerous Sacred Texts for his monastery and the Dair as-Surîân. Among his recent work is a Commentary on Romans by St. Chrysostom and parts of the Difnar.[7]

THE SHEPHERD

The Shepherd of the monastery may be the bishop, a hieromonk or a simple monk. He is characterized by the concern for and the understanding of his fellow-monks. He is the human channel through which the grace and love of God flows, he is the mediator, the "natural" confessor of the monks. He is a sympathetic listener who understands the problems and the temptations which confront the Desert Fathers. Every monastery has certain monks who are appointed as father confessors ; the shepherd of whom we are speaking, however, is neither appointed nor assigned to his role. The history of Coptic Monasticism mentions numerous monks who are remembered because of the pastoral care and guidance which they gave to their contemporaries.

One of the first shepherds of the monks in the Desert of Scetis was Paphnute Cephalas, who succeeded Isidore, as hegoumenos of Scetis. He is said to have traveled into the inner desert, searching for hermits who lived in remote parts, who were unknown to people generally. There he met the famous hermits St. Timothy and St. Onuphrius.

St. John the Hegumen became a monk in the Desert of Scetis at the beginning of the 7th century. He was captured three times by the raiding Berbers. About 641, he became hegoumenos of Dair Abû Maqâr, where he left his impress on a group of disciples, of whom the best known were Abraham and George. Another outstanding shepherd of the desert was St. John Kame, who gathered around him three hundred disciples. He built a monastery and a church which formed a new foundation in the Desert of Scetis. His profound guiding influence was manifested in the lives of some

---

(7) The *Difnar* or *Antiphonarium* is used in the Psalmodia. It has two hymns for each day, usually both of them are in honour of the same saint, but, sometimes for more than one saint, if another is commemorated on the same day. The date of the compilation of the *Difnar* is not known, but reference to such a book occurs as early as the 8th century. Its contents are mainly based upon the *Synaxarium,* though many details have been added, and some recent saints occur in it who are not mentioned in the *Synaxarium.*

of his disciples such as Shanûdah, Murqus, Colluthus, George the Deacon, George the Presbyter and others, who were trained under him.

In our own days, Anbâ Tawfîlus may be regarded as the ideal type of shepherd. As bishop of the Dair as-Surîân he spends a great deal of his time with his monks, sharing with them in their problems. The shepherd of the shepherds is the present Patriarch, Anbâ Kîrillus VI, who, apart from having been confessor to many monks, incorporates the essential qualities and talents of the true shepherd.

THE ASCETE

Though Egyptian monasticism and asceticism are usually considered as synonymous, this assumption is not always correct, at least at the present time, since not all monks are necessarily ascetes in the strict sense of the term. Again, we must be careful not to confuse asceticism with mysticism. The distinction is clearly pointed out by a monk of the Eastern Church who states : "Between the ascetic life, that is, the life in which God's action predominates, there is the same difference as between rowing a boat and sailing it ; the oar is the ascetic effort, the sail is the mystical passivity which is unfurled to catch the divine wind." [8] This means, that the ascetic life is a life of "acquired" virtues, depending upon fasting, patient endurance, vigils, abstinence, weeping and mourning, voluntary poverty, humility, love and hospitality.[9]

It is difficult to define an exact ascetic pattern among the monks of Egypt. All of them, however, held that the gratification of the senses was sinful, and that the desires of the flesh were to be subdued by fasting, abstinence, vigils, prayer and contemplation.

Asceticism in Coptic Monasticism is expressed in two forms : The solitary or anchoritic and the communal or coenobitic type. Historically speaking, the solitary life preceded the coenobitic life. It is only when the spontaneous and radical ascetic expression as found in the third century hermits became institutionalized and regulated, that the need arose for organization, that is the monastic rule and discipline.

Though the great hermits of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn and the Wâdî 'Arabah began their ascetic life as solitaries, they demanded from their followers to enter first the coenobium in order to be trained in the practice of asceticism. St. Antony forbade the young and inexperienced to enter the desert without passing through a period of probation. Thus, in order to live the solitary life, the monk had to prove his worthiness first in the communal life, and only after a period of probation was he permitted to undertake the solitary life.[10]

THE SOLITARY

From the third to the present century, certain monks have felt that the perfect ascetic ideal can be attained only by living the solitary life, that is, dwelling in caves of the most simple and primitive character, in some instances, mere holes hewn out in the rock and provided with some rough masonry.

---

(8) *Orthodox Spirituality*, 25.

(9) For a guide to the ascetic life, *cf.* Palladius, "Questions and Answers on the Ascetic Rule," II, 149-336.

(10) In the 4th century, Cellia and Scetis were the deserts of the anchorites, whilst a semi-coenobitic life was observed in Nitria,

According to Abûnâ Antûnîûs as-Surîânî, who has lived a life of a solitary for many years, there are five stages or grades through which the solitary must pass before he reaches the stage of absolute isolation from the world.[11] They are as follows :

1. As a member of coenobitic community.
2. As a beginner in the solitary life within the monastery itself. The beginner observes complete silence, performing his work quietly, while remaining in his cell. He thereby develops a feeling of alienation from the community, so that he becomes "a stranger" among his brethren.
3. Persevering in this solitude for several weeks. At this stage, the monk still lives in the monastery, but leaves his cell only once a week on Sunday to attend the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.
4. The fourth stage is his transference from the monastery to the cave, so as to be removed from all people.
5. The final stage is that of the itinerant anchorite, who lives in caves, unknown to anybody, save to God alone.

Should, by chance, a solitary pay a temporary visit to his fellow monks or for some other reason be forced to leave his cave, he must on his return go through the above mentioned stages of preparation again before he can resume his solitary life.

In the summer of 1959, Abûnâ Antûnîûs was summoned by the Patriarch to leave his cave and to reside in the Patriarchate in Cairo. After two months, however, he felt the need to return to the cave life. Accordingly, he went first to the monastery, where he shared in the monastic life. Then he stayed for a certain time in a cell in the monastery plantation, where he prepared himself for his final step, that is, to resume his life in the cave.

THE COENOBITIC MONK

Even in the early days of Egyptian Monasticism, some solitaries formed communities, which became known as *coenobia*, which were governed by a coenobiarch. The Antonian *coenobia* had only a simple organization without hard and fast rules or regulations. The death of the respective organizer or first coenobiarch marked a decisive stage in the process of organization. The example of the coenobiarch, who in his life-time had received obedience and respect from his disciples, soon became the pattern and ideal to be followed. Coenobitic communities rapidly sprang up throughout Egypt, and some of them followed the highly individualistic character of the Antonian Rule, whilst others adhered to the regulated monasticism of the Pachomian Rule.

The 20th century is marked by a rediscovery of the coenobitic ideal. At Dair as-Surîân, the monks share in communal meals, a practice once observed in all monasteries, as testified by the existence of refectories, though this practice was abandoned several centuries ago. Furthermore, they deposit their monthly allowance in a

---

(11) Palladius mentions a certain brother, who came to Abba Arsenius, and after having received his advice, advanced in the ascetic life until he reached the first grade.

common treasury. They possess no personal property, not even their garments. In the case of temporary absence from the monastery, they leave the key of their cell with a fellow-monk.

Yet it would be inexact to call this modern coenobitic way of life a revival of the Pachomian Rule, for though the monks stress the virtues of communal life, the group is still characterized by a high degree of individualism.

THE DISCLAIMER

The disclaimer is a saintly monk, who does not wish, however, to be known as such, and consequently, he intentionally produces a false impression of himself. There is a story told about Abba Arsenius, who being afraid of being overcome at night by the Devil, asked two of his friends, Abba Alexander and Abba Zôila, to keep watch over him. However, instead of watching, his disciples fell asleep, whilst Abba Arsenius pretending to be asleep, kept vigil and fought the Devil.

The disclaimer may pose as insane, and he may say things which no one would expect a monk to say, merely to cover up his real spiritual life. Thus, there is the following story of Abûnâ Q. It was a Friday, and some of the monks were engaged in a manual task. As this was somewhat difficult, one of the monks said to Abûnâ Q. "You can help us, you are strong man." "Indeed, I am," replied Abûnâ Q., "seeing that I have just eaten half a dozen of eggs." (In reality, Abûnâ Q. observes very strictly the fast regulations.) Another monk asked Abûnâ Q. about a quotation from Holy Scriptures. Abûnâ Q. replied, "I don't know, all I read is the Readers' Digest." (Abûnâ Q. is known for his encyclopaedic knowledge of the Holy Scriptures).

THE CHARISMATICUS

The Charismaticus is one who has the gifts of grace (charismata). These spiritual gifts may include the power to heal, to restore to health, to exorcise evil spirits, etc. In many instances, the Charismaticus is considered by the people to be also a Thaumaturgus, a wonder-worker, who is able to perform miracles on account of his profound spirituality.

The Coptic Church has produced many Thaumaturgi throughout the centuries. There was Matthew the Poor, hegoumenos of a monastery in the Mountain of Aswan, who wrought many miracles and in many encounters contested successfully with the devils of the desert. (7th of Kihak). Pamin of Minya suffered much during the Diocletian persecution. On the death of Diocletian, he was replaced, and he entered a monastery in the vicinity of al-Ashmunain, where he became famous for his power to heal the sick. Once a Roman princess came to him to be healed. He received her without special deference, and refused the gifts which she offered for her recovery. (9th of Kihak). Peter the Presbyter, an ascete, was also famous for his power to heal the sick, and he possessed in addition the charisma to reconcile those at variance. (5th of Barmahat). Badasius, a monk in one of the Pachomian monasteries, was held in great esteem for the many miracles of healing which he performed (23rd of Tûbah). The most famous of all the early Thaumaturgi was Menas, the Soldier.

Every century has produced its Thaumaturgi, who healed the sick irrespective of their religious tenets. Anbâ Sarabamûn, Bishop of Minûfiyah, healed Zuhra, the daughter of Muhammad 'Alî, and Anbâ Ishaq of the Fayyûm healed a certain Hassan the "one-eyed" of Maghagha. Many of the Coptic Thaumaturgi have been famous on account of the power of their prayers, especially with regard to rendering barren women pregnant, or causing them to bear male offspring.

Naturally, as in all professions, there have been charlatans, but those may be easily recognized, for the true Charismaticus does not accept remuneration for his services under any consideration.

Indeed, the true Charismaticus is a humble person whose charisma is the result of contemplation and a constant awareness of the Divine Presence. The present Patriarch, Anbâ Kîrillus VI may be mentioned as an example of a Thaumaturgus who has been endued with charisma for many years.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(Works cited in this volume)

Abbot, Nabia	*The Monasteries of the Fayum.* Chicago: University of Chicago, 1937.
‘Abd Alla Ibn ‘Abd al- Aziz Ibn Abî Mûsâ Abû ‘Abaid al-Bakrî	*Al-Masalik wa’l-Mamalik.* Algiers: 1857.
‘Abd al-Masîh Salîb al-Mas‘ûdî al-Barâmûsî	*Tuhfat al-Sa’ilin fi Dhikr Adyurat Ruhban al-Misriyin.* Cairo: Ain-Shams Press, 1932.
‘Abd al-Masîh Wâsif	*Bulugh al-Maram.* Cairo: Ramsîs Press, 1925.
Abudacni, Joseph	*Historia Jacobitarum seu Coptorum in Aegypto, etc.* Lubecae: S.J. Schmidius, 1733.
Addison, James Thayer	*The Christian Approach to Moslems.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1942.
Al-Masrî, Iris Habib	“A Historical Survey of the Convents for Women in Egypt up to the Present Day.” *Bulletin de la Société d’Archéologie Copte,* XIV, 1950-1957, 63 - 111.
Al-Warthilânî al-Husein Ibn Muhammad as-Sa‘îd	*Nuzhat al anzar fi fadl ‘Ilm al-Tarîkh wa ‘l-Akhbar.* Tunis: 1321 A.H.
Amélineu, Emile Clément	“Samuel de Qalamoun.” *Rev. Hist. Relig.,* 30, 1890, 1-47.
Amélineu, Emile Clément	*La Géographie de l’Egypte.* Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1893.
Amélineu, Emile Clément	*Histoire des Monastères de la Basse-Egypte, vies des Saints Paul, Antoine, Macaire, Maxime et Domèce, Jean le Nain.* Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1895.
Andréossy, Antoine-François	“Mémoire sur la vallée des lacs de Natroun.” *Description de l’Egypte, ou Recueil des Observations et des Recherches,* 1, 279, f.
André Thevet d’Angoulême	*Cosmographie du Levant.* Lyon: Jean de Tournes et Guil. Gazeau, 1556.

Antoninus Martyr	*Of the Holy Land Visited.* London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, II, 1896.
Arrowsmith, J.	*Egypt.* London: J. Arrowsmith, 1832.
Assemanus, Stephanus Euodius et Joseph Simonius	*Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae Codicum Manuscriptorum Catalogus.* — 3 vols. Paris: Librairie Orientale et Americaine, 1926.
Attiyâ, 'Azîz Suryâl	*The Crusade in the Later Middle Ages.* London: Methuen, 1938.
Attiyâ, 'Azîz Suryâl	*The Arabic Manuscripts of Mount Sinai.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1955.
Atiyâ, 'Aziz Suryâl, Yassâ 'Abd al-Masîh, O.H.E. KHS-Burmester	*History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church,* II, II, & III. Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1948, 1959.
Autefage, S.J.	*Les Coptes.* Lyons: Vitte et Perrussel, 1885.
Azadian, Hug, Munier	"Notes sur le Ouady Mouellah." *Bulletin de la Société Royale de Géogr. d'Egypte*, XVIII, 51-54.
Badawy, Alexandre	*Guide de l'Egypte Chrétienne.* Cairo: Société d'Archéologie Copte, n.d.
Bacht, Heinrich	"Antonius und Pachomius. Von der Anachorese zum Coenobitentum." *Antonius Magnus Eremita*, 66-107.
Baedeker, Karl	*Egypt.* Leipsic: Karl Baedeker, 1892.
Baedeker, Karl	*Egypt and the Sudan.* Leipsic: Karl Baedeker, 1929.
Ball, John	*Notes on Recent Determinations of Geographical Positions in the Libyan Desert.* Survey Department Paper No. 34. Cairo: Government Press, 1939.
Bamm, Peter	*Frühe Stätten der Christenheit.* München: Kösel Verlag, 1956.
Basset, René	"Le Synaxaire Arabe Jacobite." *Patrologia Orientalis*, I, III, XI, XVI, XVII.

Baumgarten, Martini	*Peregrinatio in Aaegyptum, Arabiam, Palestinam et Syriam.* Norimbergae : Paulum Kaufmannum, 1594.
Baumstark, Anton	*Die christliche Literatur des Orients.* 2 vols. Leipzig: G.J. Göschen'sche Verlagshandlung, 1911.
Beadnell, H.J.L.	*The Topography and Geology of the Fayum Province of Egypt.* Cairo: Survey Department, 1905.
Becker, C.H.	*Der Islam. Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur des Islamischen Orients.* Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1913.
Becquet, Th.	"Les Monastères du Ouadi Natroun." *Irénikon,* 12, 351-371.
Belgrave, C. Dalrymple	*Siwa, the Oasis of Jupiter Ammon.* London: John Lane the Bodley Head Ltd., 1923.
Bell, H. Idris	*Egypt from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948.
Belon de Mans	*Les Observations de plusieurs singularitez et choses mémorables, trouvées en Grèce, Asie, Egypte, Arabie et autre pays étrangers redigées en trois livres.* Paris: Anvers, 1555.
Belon de Mans	"Peter Belon's Bemerkungen auf einer Reise von Cairo durch den Sinaitischen Strich vom Petraeischen Arabien nach Palestina." Paulus, *Sammlung* I, 200 f.
Belzoni, Giovanni Battista	*Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries in Egypt and Nubia.* London: Murray, 1821.
Besse, J. M.	*Les moines d'Orient antérieurs au concile de Chalcédoine.* Paris: Librairie Religieuse H. Oudin, 1900.
Beth, Karl	*Die Orientalische Christenheit der Mittelmeerländer.* Berlin: Schwetschke, 1902.
Blanckenhorn, Max	*Geologie Aegyptens. Führer durch die geologische Vergangenheit Aegyptens von der Steinkohlperiode bis zur Jetztzeit.* Berlin: J.F. Starcke, 1901.

Blaue, Willem Janszon	*Nova Aegypti Tabula.* Amsterdam: 1662-1665.
Blomfield, R.M.	"St. Menas of Alexandria." *Bulletin de la Société Archéologique d'Alexandrie*, 6, 1904, 56-73.
Blumenau, F.W.	*Statistich — geographisch — topographische Beschreibung von Egypten.* Halle: J.C. Hendels Verlag, 1793.
Bonne	*Carte de l'Egypte ancienne et moderne.* Lattré, 1762.
Borchardt, Ludwig und Herbert Ricke	*Aegypten.* Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth, A.G., 1929.
Bothaina Abd el-Hamid Mohamed	*The Egyptians and the Arabs as seen by the English two centuries ago.* Cairo: Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop, 1957.
Bourguet, Pierre du	"Saint-Antoine et Saint-Paul du Désert." *Bulletin de la Société Française d'Egyptologie*, 7, June 1951, 41.
Boussac, M.H.	"Deirs et Nécropoles de la Chaine Arabique." *Revue hebdomadaire*, Oct. 1908.
Boussett, Wilhelm	"Das Mönchtum der sketischen Wüste." *Z. Kirchengeschichte*, 5, 1923, 1-41.
Bouyer, Louis	*The Meaning of Monastic Life.* London: Burns & Oates, 1955.
Breccia, Ev.	*Alexandrea ad Aegyptum.* Bergamo: Instituto Italiano d'Arti Grafiche, 1922.
Bremond, Jean	*Pèlerinage au Ouadi Natroun. Une oasis du désert monastique.* n. p., n. d.
Bremond, Jean	*Les Pères du Désert.* — 2 vols. Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1927.
Breydenbach, Bernard de	*Les Saintes Pèlegrinations de Bernard de Breydenbach* (1483). (Ed. F. Larrivaz). Cairo: Imprimerie Nationale, ~1904.
Brown, Robert	*The History and Description of Africa and of the notable things therein contained by al-Hassan ibn Mohammad al-Wezaz al-Fazi, a Moor, baptized as Giovanni Leone, but better known as Leo Africanus, done in English in the Year 1600 by John Pory.* 3 vols. London: Hakluyt Society, 1896.

Browne, W.G.	*Travels in Africa, Egypt and Syria from 1792-1793.* London: T. Cadwell & W. Davies, *et al.*, 1799.
Brugsch, Heinrich Karl	*Wanderung nach den Natronklöstern in Aegypten.* Berlin: Drimmler, 1855.
Bruns, Paul Jakob	*Neue Systematische Erdbeschreibung von Aegypten.* Nürnberg: Schneider und Weigelt, 1799.
Budge, E.A. Wallis	*The Miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary.* London: J. Criggs, 1900.
Budge, E.A. Wallis	*Cook's Handbook for Egypt and the Sudan.* London: Thos. Cook & Son, 1906.
Budge, E.A. Wallis	*The Life of Takla Hâymânôt in the version of Dabra Libanôs, and the Miracles of Takla Hâymânôt.* 2 vols. London: Privately printed for Lady Meux, 1906.
Budge, E.A. Wallis	*A History of Ethiopia.* 2 vols. London: Methuen & Co., 1928.
Budge, E.A. Wallis	*One Hundred and Ten Miracles of our Lady.* London: Humphrey Milford, 1933.
Budge, E.A. Wallis	*The Wit and Wisdom of the Christian Fathers of Egypt: The Syrian Version of the Apophtegmata Patrum.* London: Oxford University Press, 1934.
Burkitt, F.C.	"The Monasteries of the Wadi 'n-Natroun." *The Journal of Theological Studies*, XXVIII, 320-5.
Burkitt, F.C.	"The Monasteries of the Wadi 'n-Natroun." *The Journal of Theological Studies*, XXXIV, 188-192.
Burkitt, F.C.	"The Monasteries of the Wadi 'n-Natroun." *The Journal of Theological Studies*, XXXVI, 105-107.
Burmester, O.H.E. KHS-	"On the date and authorship of the Arabic Synaxarium of the Coptic Church." *The Journal of Theological Studies*, XXXVIII, 240-53.
Burmester, O.H.E. KHS-	*A Guide to the Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n Natrûn.* Cairo: Société d'Archéologie Copte, n.d.

Burmester, O.H.E. KHS Yassâ 'Abd al Masîh	*History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church.* II, I. Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1943.
Burmester, O.H.E. KHS-	"The Consecration of the Holy Myron (Chrism) and the Kallielaion (Oil of the Catechumens." *Eastern Churches Quarterly*, XI, 1954, 32-43.
Burmester, O.H.E. KHS	"Rite of the Initiation into Monasticism." *Eastern Churches Quarterly*, XI, 1954, 217-229.
Burmester, O.H.E. KHS	*A Guide to the Ancient Coptic Churches of Cairo.* Cairo: Société d'Archéologie Copte, 1955.
Burmester, O.H.E. KHS-	*Notice on the Map of Christian Egypt.* Cairo: Les Editions Universitaires d'Egypte, 1955.
Burmester, O.H.E. KHS-	*The Rite of Consecration of the Patriarch of Alexandria.* Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1960.
Burns, Thomas W.	Research Report NM 007 082.09.07. NAMRU-3, Cairo, Egypt.
Butcher, Edith Louisa	*The Story of the Church of Egypt.* 2 vols. London: Smith, Elder, 1897.
Butler, Alfred J.	*The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the last thirty years of the Roman Dominion.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902.
Butler, Alfred J.	*The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt.* 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1884.
Cailliaud, Frederich	*Voyage à Meroe, au fleuve blanc au delà Fasoql.* Paris: Dubure, Tillard, *et al.*, 1826.
Campenhausen, Hans v.	*Die Askese im Urchristentum.* Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1949.
Carne, John	*Letters from the East.* 2 vols. London: Henry Colburn, 1826.
Carré, Jean Marie	*Voyageurs et Ecrivains Français en-Egypte.* Le Caire: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1932.
Carswell, John	*Coptic Tattoo Designs.* Beirut: The American University of Beirut, 1958.
Cary, John	*A New Map of Egypt.* London: John Cary, 1805.

Cattaui, Georges	"Chez les Coptes. Visite au Cenobites du Désert." *La Bourse Egyptienne*, April 16, 1952.
Cattaui, Joseph	*L'Egypte.* Le Caire: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1926.
Cauwenbergh, Paul V.	*Etude sur les moines d'Egypte.* Paris: Louvain, 1914.
Chaine, A.S.J.	"Le couvent de Saint Antoine." *Le Rayon*, 9, 1936, 246-249.
Chaine, M.	*La Chronologie des Temps Chrétiens de l'Egypte et de l'Ethiopie.* Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1925.
Chaine, M.	"Aethiopische Texte der Pariser Nationalbibliothek," in Kaufmann, *Ikonographie der Menasampullen*, 30-55.
Chaine, M.	"Note sur les animaux de Saint Menas." *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien*, 13, (1908), 212-218.
Chaleur, Sylvestre	"La Devotion a Saint Antoine." *Les Cahiers Coptes*, 7-8, 1954, 1-5.
Chaleur, Sylvestre	"Le Culte de Saint Antoine." *Bulletin de l'Institut des Etudes Coptes*, 1958, 31-41.
Chantemerle, C. De	"Voix du Désert." *Rev. apologet.*, 18, 1927, 252-531.
Cheneau, R.P. Paul	*Les Saints de l'Egypte.* Jerusalem: Couvent des RR. PP. Franciscains, 1923.
Chester, Greville J.	"Notes on the Coptic Dayrs of the Wady Natroun and on the dayr Antonios in the Eastern desert". *Archaeological Journal*, 30, 1873, 105-16.
Clarke, Somers	*Christian Antiquities in the Nile Valley, a contribution towards the study of the ancient churches.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912.
Clarke, W.K.L.	*The Ascetic Works of St. Basil.* London: S.P.C.K., 1925.
Clot Bey, Antoine B.	*Aperçu Général sur l'Egypte.* Paris: Fortin, Masson, *et al.*, 1840.

Cogordan, George
Relations du voyage fait au couvent de Saint-Antoine, dans le désert de la Basse Thébaide . . au mois de Novembre de l'an mille neuf cent un.
Paris: n.p., 1903.

Constantinides, Michael
The Orthodox Church.
London: William & Norgate, 1931.

Coppin, J.
Relation des Voyages fait dans la Turquie, la Thébaide, et la Barbarie.
Lyons: Bruyset, 1720.

"Copts v. Police."
Time, March 15, 1937, 41.

Cosson, Anthony de
"The Desert City of El Muna."
Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie d'Alexandrie, 31, (1936).

Cosson, Anthony de
Marcotis.
London: Country Life, Ltd., 1935.

"Couvent Copte."
Images, May 17, 1947.

"Le couvent dans le sable derrière les murailles du monastère d'al-Moharrak."
Le Progrès Egyptien, March 6, 1948.

Cramer, Maria
Das Christlich-Koptische Aegypten einst und heute.
Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1959.

Cramer, Maria
"Monastische Liturgie in Koptischen Klöstern."
Jahrbuch f. Liturgiewissenschaft, 14, 1938, 230-42.

Crawford, O.G.S.
Ethiopian Itineraries Circa 1400-1524.
Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, 1958.

Creswell, K.A.C.
Early Muslim Architecture.
Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1940.

Cross, F.L. (ed.)
The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church.
London: Oxford University Press, 1957.

Crum, Walter E.
"Hugh Evelyn White."
Journal of Egyptian Archaeology, 10, 1924, 331-332.

Crum, Walter E.
Catalogue of the Coptic Manuscripts in the John Rylands Library, Manchester.
Manchester: University Press, 1909.

Cureton, William
The Festal Letters of Athanasius.
London: James Madden & Co., 1848.

Curzon, Robert
Visits to the Monasteries in the Levant.
London: John Murray, 1847.

Czetsch-Lindenwald, H.V.
"Das Wasser des Abu Menas."
Die Pharmazeutische Industrie, 20, 1958, 284-5.

"A Dar el-Salam — Les Monastères Coptes de la Mer Rouge."
Le Progrès Egyptien, Jan. 18, 1952.

D'Anglure
Le Saint Voyage de Jérusalem par le Baron d'Anglure en 1935.
Paris: Bibliothèque Catholique, 1858.

D'Anville, B.
Egypt called in the Country of Missir.
R. d'Anville, 1765.

Davis, M.H.
"The Life of Abba John Khame."
Patr. Orient., XIV.

Debanne, Nicolas J.
"Le Mouled de Sitti Dimiana."
Bull. de la Soc. Roy. de Géogr. d'Egypte, viii, 1917, 75-78.

Defrémery, C. and B.R. Sanguinetti
Voyages d'Ibn Batoutah. 4 vols.
Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1893.

De Goeje, M.J.
Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum. VII. Kitâb al-a'lâk an-Nafîsa VII, Abû Alî Ahmed ibn Omar ibn Rosthah, et Kitâb al-Boldân, Ahmed ibn Abî Jakûb ibn Wâdhih al-Kâtîb al-Jakûbî.
Lugduni Batavorum: Brill, 1892.

Delehaye, H.
"L'invention des reliques de Saint Ménas à Constantinople."
Analecta Bollandiana, 29, 1910, 117 f.

Delisle, Guillaume
Carte de l'Egypte, et al.
Paris: Academie R. des Sciences, 1707.

Delineatio
L'Egitto Antico e Moderno.
Roma: Caleografia Camerale, 1798.

De Vries, Wilhelm
"Das Problem der 'communicatio in sacris cum dissidentibus' im Nahen Osten zur Zeit der Union (17. und 18. Jahrhundert)."
Ostkirchliche Studien, VI, 1957, 2-3 81-106.

De Winton, W.E.	"List of Mammals obtained by the Hon. N. Charles Rothshild and the Hon. R. Henley in the Natron Valley, Egypt." *Novitates Zoologicae,* X, 1903, 279-285.
Dom Francisque	"Histoire de l'Ethiopie." *Historiale Description de l'Ethiopie,* 42-341.
Doresse, Jean	"Monastères Coptes aux environs d'Armant en Thébaide." *Analecta Bollandiana,* LXVII, 327--349.
Doresse, Jean	"Une excursion pour votre Week-End: Les Monastères de la Mer Rouge." *Images,* June 3, 1950.
Drescher, James	*Apa Mena. A Selection of Coptic Texts Relating to St. Menas.* Cairo: Société d'Archéologie Copte, 1946.
Drescher, James	"St. Mena's Camels once more." *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte,* VII (1941), 19-32.
Drescher, James	*Three Coptic Legends: Hilaria, Archellites, the seven Sleepers.* Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut Français, 1947.
Du Bernat	*Nouveaux Mémoires des Missions de la Compagnie de Jésus dans le Levant,* Vol. II. Paris: Leclerc, 1717.
Du Bernat	"Brief des Pater Du Bernat, Missionaire von der Gesellschaft Jesu, in Aegypten and des Pater Fleuriau von derselben Gesellschaft." Paulus, *Sammlung,* IV, 233-288.
Dulaurier	*Chronique de Matthieu d'Edessa.* Paris: Librairie, Rue des Grecs 7, 1858.
Dümichen, Johannes	*Die Oasen der Libyschen Wüste.* Ihre alten Namen und ihre Lage, ihre vorzüglichsten Erzeugnisse und die ihrer Tempeln verehrten Gottheiten. Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1877.
Dunn, Samuel	*Ancient and Modern Egypt.* London: Robert Sayer, 1786.
Eichrodt, Walter	*Theologie des Alten Testamentes.* Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1933.
Engberding, Hieronymus	"Ein Problem in der homologia vor der hlg. Kommunion in der aegyptischen Liturgie." *Orientalia Christiana Periodica,* 2 (1936), 145-154.

Enouy, G. Joh.
Egypt with part of Arabia and Palestine. Compiled from draughts of the Scientific Institute established at Cairo. 1800.

Entraigues, Comte de
Lettres galantes et pittoresque sur l'Egypte. Auriant, "Le voyage orientale de M. d'Entraigues." *Revue Bleue,* May 17, 1930.

Ethiopian Synaxarium
The Book of the Saints of the Ethiopian Church. Transl. E.A.W. Budge, 4 vols. Cambridge: At the University Press 1928.

Evagrius
History of the Church from A.D. 431 to A.D. 594. London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854.

Evelyn-White, Hugh G.
The History of the Monasteries of Nitria and of Scetis. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expedition, printed Cambridge University Press, 1932.

Evelyn-White, Hugh G.
The Monasteries of the Wâdi 'n-Natrûn. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expedition, printed Cambridge University Press, 1933.

Evesham, John
The voyage passed by sea into Aegypt. In *The Principal Navigations Voyages, etc.,* VI.

Evetts, B.T.A. (ed. & transl.)
The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and some neighbouring countries, attributed to Abu Saleh, the Armenian. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895.

Evetts, B.T.A. (ed. & transl.)
"The History of the Patriarchs." *Patrologia Orientalis,* I, V, X.

Evetts, B.T.A.
"Le rite Copte de la prise d'habit et de la profession monacale." *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien,* 2, 1, (11) 1906, 60-73, 130-148.

Falls, J.C. Ewald
"Ein Besuch in den Natronklöstern der sketischen Wüste." *Frankfurter Zeitgemässe Broschüren,* 25, 1905, 61-85.

Falls, J.C. Ewald
Three Years in the Libyan Desert. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1913.

Fakhry, Ahmed
Siwa Oasis, Its History and Antiquities. Cairo: Government Press, 1944.

Fakhry, Ahmed	*The Monastery of Kalamoun.* Le Caire: Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1947.
Fakhry, Ahmed	"Wadi el Natroun." *Annales du Service des Antiquités*, XL, 839-848.
Fanus, Shammas Nassif	*Tarîkh al-qiddis al-ʻAzim al-Anbâ Samwîl bi-Dair al-Qalamûn.* Gizah: 1952.
Farner, Konrad	*Christentum und Eigentum.* Bern: A. Francke, 1947.
Fedden, Henry Romilly	"A study of the Monastery of St. Anthony in the Eastern desert." *University of Egypt, Faculty of Arts Bull.*, 5, 1937, 1-60.
Felix Fabri	*The Book of Wanderings*, I & II. London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, VII-X, 1893.
Ferrar, W.J.	"Egyptian monasticism." *Church quart. rev.*, 89, 1919-20, 233-46.
Ferrari, Guy	"Sources for the early iconography of St. Anthony." *Antonius Magnus Eremita*, 248-253.
Fesquet, Goupil	*Voyage d'Horace Vernet en Orient.* 2 vols. Bruxelles: Ad. Wahlan & Co., 1844.
Fîlûthâûs ʻAwad	*Maimar ash-Shahîdah Dimiânah*, by Anbâ Yûânnis, Bishop of al-Burullus. Cairo: Al-Ahlîah, 1917.
Finsch, O. und G. Hartlaub	*Baron Carl von der Decken's Reisen in Ost-Afrika*. Bd. IV. Die Vögel Ost-Afrika's. Leipzig: C.F. Winter, 1870.
Flaubert, Gustave	*Voyage en Orient, (1849-51).* Paris: Librairie de France, 1925.
Fletcher, Joseph F.	*Christianity and Property.* Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947.
Flury, Samuel	"Samarra und die Ornamentik der Moschee des Ibn Tulun." *Der Islam*, IV, 421-432.
Flury, Samuel	"Die Gipsornamente des Der es Surjani." *Der Islam*, VI, 71-87.

Fontaine, A.L.	"Le monachisme Copte et la montagne de Saint Antoine." *Bulletin de l'Institut des Etudes Coptes*, 1958, 3-30.
Forbin, Count de	*Travels in Egypt in 1817-18.* London: Richard Phillips & Co., 1819.
Fowler, Montague	*Christian Egypt, Past, Present and Future.* London: Church Newspaper Co., Ltd., 1901.
François, Baron de Tott	*Mémoires sur les Turcs et les Tatars.* Paris: 1784.
Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli,	*Visit to the Holy Places of Egypt, Palestine and Syria in 1384.* (transl. Bellorini and Hoade). Jerusalem: Franciscan Press, 1948.
Galland	"Mémoire des observations que l'on peut faire dans les voyages de Levant, remis à M. Galland, lors de son voyage, par M. Colbert," in Omont, *Missions Archéologiques Françaises en Orient aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles,* I, 207.
Garrido, Julio et Sylvestre Chaleur	"Quelques icônes du monastère d'Anba Bishoî." *Les Cahiers Coptes,* 10, 1956, 26-34.
Gasalee, Sir Stephen	"Bibliography of Christian Egypt." *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology,* 1-3, 1914-16.
Gasalee, Sir Stephen	"The Psychology of the Monks of the Egyptian Desert." *Philosopher,* 10, 1932, 73-81.
Gaudefroy - Demombynes, M.	*Muslim Institutions.* London: George Allan & Unwin Ltd., 1954.
Gayet, Al.	*L'Art Copte.* Paris: Leroux, 1902.
Gibbon, Edward	*The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.* 4 vols. London: Frederich Warne & Co., n.d.
Giordani, Igino	*The Social Message of the Early Church Fathers.* Paterson: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1944.
Giamberardini, Gabriele	"Il Convento dell'Anbâ Samû'îl e i miracoli della Vergine." *La Voce del Nilo,* XVII, 5, 140-155.
Giamberardini, Gabriele	*S. Antonio Abate, Astro del deserto.* Cairo: Mondiale, 1957.

Glanville, S.R.K.	*The Legacy of Egypt.* Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1942.
Gohari, Rifaat el	*Itinéraire de l'excursion du Caire au Monastère de St. Antoine.* Le Caire: Automobile Club d'Egypte, n.d.
Gohari, Rifaat el	*Itinéraire, Wadi al-Natroun.* Le Caire: Automobile Club d'Egypte, n.d.
Golubovich, Gerolamo	*Biblioteca Bio-Bibliographica della Terra Santa e dell Oriente Francescano.* Quaracchi: 1927.
Goldschmidt, Lazarus and F.M. Esteves Pereira	*Vida do Abba Daniel do Mosteiro de Sceté.* Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1897.
Graf, Georg	"Zur Autorschaft des arabischen Synaxars der Kopten." *Orientalia*, 9, 1940, 240-3.
Graf, Georg	*Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur.* Citta del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944.
Graffin, R., Nau, F.	*Patrologia Orientalis,* 24 vols. Paris: Firmin-Didot et Cie, 1907, ff.
Granger	*Relation du Voyage fait en Egypte, en l'année 1730.* Paris: Jacques Vincent, 1745.
Graul, Karl	*Reise durch Egypten.* Leipzig: Dörffling & Franke, 1854.
Gravit, Francis W.	"Peiresc et les études coptes en France au XVIIe siècle." *Bull. Soc. Arch. Copte,* IV, 1938, 1-21.
Gray, Louis H.	"Two Armenian Passions of Saints in the Sasanian Period." *Analecta Bollandiana,* LXII, 362-376.
Grebaut, S.	"Le Synaxaire Ethiopien." *Patrologia Orientalis,* IX, XV.
Güssefeld, F.L.	*Charte von Aegypten.* Nürnberg: Homann Erben, 1800.
Guessfeldt, P.	"Die Arabische Wüste und ihre Klöster." *Deutsche Rundschau,* October 1870.
Gregorio Abul-Pharajio	*Historica Compendiosa Dynastiarum.* Oxoniae: H. Hall, 1663.

Guidi, Ignazio	"Le Synaxaire Ethiopien." *Patrologia Orientalis*, I, VII.
Gunther, John	*Inside Africa.* London: Hamish Hamilton, 1955.
Habashî, Labib	"Al-Adyriah al-Sharqîah wa'd Dair-al-Muharraq." *Al-Rahbânat al-Qibtîah*, 46-53.
Habashî, Labib	Fî Sahrâ al-'Arab wa' l-Adyirâ al-Sharqîah. Cairo: Al-Rahmanîah Press, 1929. "Haûla, Harâbu mîn al-Dunyâ ilâ Wâdî 'n-Natrûn." *Al-Musawwar*, June 17, 1955.
Haggard, Howard W.	*Devils, Drugs and Doctors.* New York: Pocket Books, Inc., 1953.
Hahn-Hahn, Ida Marie	*Lives of the Fathers of the Desert.* London: Richardson, 1867.
Hakluyt, Richard	*The Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques and Discoveries.* 17 vols. Glasgow: James MacLehose & Sons, 1903 f.
Hamilton, William	*Remarks on Several Parts of Turkey*, Part I, Aegyptica. London: T. Payne, etc., 1809.
Hannah, J.C.	*Christian Monasticism, a great force in History.* London: Allen & Unwin, 1925.
Harnack, Adolf v.	*Monasticism, its Ideals and History.* London: William and Norgate, 1901.
Hasselquist, Frederick	*Voyages and Travels in the Levant in the Years 1749-52.* (ed. C. Linnaeus). London: Davis & Reymers, 1766.
Hatch, William Henry Paine	"A Visit to the Coptic convents in Nitria." *American School of Oriental Research Annual*, 6, 1924, 93-107.
Hatch, William Henry Paine	"The Apostles in the New Testament and in the Ecclesiastical Tradition of Egypt." *Harvard Theological Review*, 21, 1928, 147-59.
Heckel, Andreas	*Die Kirche von Aegypten.* Strassburg: Haitz, 1918.
Hertling, Ludwig V.	*Antonius der Einsiedler.* Innsbruck: Rauch, 1929.
Heussi, Karl	*Der Ursprung des Mönchtums.* Tübingen: Mohr, 1936.

Heyworth - Dunne, J.	"Education in Egypt and the Copts." *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte,* VI, 1940, 91.
Hindringer, R.	"Antonios, hlg. Abt." *Lexicon für Theologie und Kirche,* I, 514.
Hoogstraal, H., Kamal Wassif and M.N. Kaiser	*New Mammal Records from the Western Desert of Egypt.* Cairo: Association of Authorship, etc. Press, 1955.
Horneman, Frederick	*The Journal of Frederick Horneman's Travels from Cairo to Mourzouk.* London: W. Budmer & Co., 1802.
Horner, George (ed.)	*The Coptic Version of the New Testament.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898.
Hyatt, Harry Middleton	*The Church of Abyssinia.* London: Luzac & Co., 1928.
Ibrahim-Hilmy	*The Literature of Egypt and the Sudan from the earliest times to the year 1885 inclusive.* 2 vols. London: Truebner & Co., 1886.
Ibn Fadl'Allah Al 'Umari	*Masalik al-Absar fî Mamalik al-Amsar.* Vol. I. Cairo: Dar al-Kutab al-Misriah.
Isûdhûrus	*Al-Kharîdat an-Nafîsah fî Târîkh al-Kanîsah.* Cairo: Sihiûn Press, 1905.
Jaeck, Joachim Heinrich	*Taschen-Bibliothek der wichtigsten und interessantesten Reisen durch Aegypten.* 2 vols. Nürnberg: Haubenstricker & Ebner, 1828.
Jarvis, C.S.	*Three Deserts.* London: John Murray, 1936.
Jennings-Bramley, W.	"A Journey to Siwa in Sept./October 1896." *Geographical Journal,* X, 6, 597-608.
J.H.	"Near the Red Sea: Ancient Desert Convents." *Egypt Travel Magazine,* 50, 1958, 13-18.
Johann Georg, Herzog zu Sachsen	*Streifzüge durch die Kirchen und Klöster Aegyptens.* Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1914.
Johann Georg, Herzog zu Sachsen	*Koptische Klöster der Gegenwart.* Aachen: Xavierius Verlag, 1918.
Johann Georg, Herzog zu Sachsen	*Neue Streifzüge durch die Kirchen und Klöster Aegyptens.* Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1930.

Johann Georg, Herzog zu Sachsen	*Neueste Streifzüge durch die Kirchen und Klöster Aegyptens.* Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1931.
John, Marquis of Bute (transl.)	*The Coptic Morning Service for the Lord's Day.* London: Cope & Penwick, 1908.
John, Bishop of Ephesus	*The Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History.* transl. R. Payne Smith. Oxford: At the University Press, 1860.
Jolowicz, N.	*Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca.* Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1858.
Jomard, E.	"Description des Antiquités de l'Héptanomide." *Description de l'Egypte, etc.*, IV, 301-2.
Jones, William J.	"The Coptic Monasteries of the Wadi Natroun." *Metropolitan Museum Bull.*, 6, 1911, 19-29.
Jones, William J.	"Monasteries of the Wadi Natroun." *Metropolitan Museum Bull.*, 7, 1912, 84-91.
Jullien, Michael	*Voyage au déserts de Scète et de Nitrie.* Lyons: Les Missions Catholiques, 1882.
Jullien, Michael	*Voyage dans le désert de la Basse-Thebaide aux couvents de St. Antoine et de St. Paul.* Lyons: Les Missions Catholiques, 1884.
Jullien, Michael	"Traditions et Légendes Coptes sur le Voyage de la Sainte Famille en Egypte." *Missions Catholiques*, XIX, 1886, 9-12.
Jullien, Michael	*L'Egypte. Souvenirs Bibliques et Chrétiens.* Lille: Société de St. Augustin, 1891.
Junkers, Wilhelm	*Reisen in Africa, 1875-96.* vol. 1. Wien & Olmuetz: Eduard Hoelzel, 1889.
Kabès, Jean	"La dévotion à la Sainte Vierge dans l'Eglise Copte." *Les Cahiers Coptes*, 2, 1952, 4-7.
Kadloubowsky E. & Palmer, G.E.H.	*Early Fathers from the Philokalia.* London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1953.
Kâmil, Sâlih Nakhlah	*Kitâb Tarîkh wa Gadwal Batârikat al-Iskandarîah al-qibti wa gadwal Gami'a bi' Ahwâl al-Mutaqaddimîn.* Cairo: Lâgnit al-Tarîkh al-Qibti, 1943.
Kâmil, Murâd	"Al Rahbanah fî al-Habashah." *Al-Rahbanah al-Qibtiyah*, 29-45.

Kâmil. Murâd	"La dernière phase des relations historiques entre l'Eglise Copte d'Egypte et celle d'Ethiopie jusqu'en 1952." *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte,* XIV, 1950-1957, 1-22.
Kammerer, A.	*La Mer Rouge l'Abyssinie et l'Arabie,* Vol. I. Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1929.
Kammerer, A.	"Les Couvents Coptes du Wadi Natroun." *L'Illustration,* March 21, 1925, 264-267.
Kammerer, M.A.	"Les Monastères." Cattaui, *L'Egypte,* 130-148.
Kammerer, Winifred	*A Coptic Bibliography.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950.
Kaufmann, Alfred	Ewiges Stromland. Stuttgart: Strecker & Schroeder, 1926.
Kaufmann, C.M.	*Die Ausgrabung der Menas - Heiligtümer in der Mareotiswüste.* Cairo: Finck & Baylaender, 1906-8.
Kaufmann. C.M.	"Neue Funde in der Menasstadt (Kar Abum)." *Römische Quartalschrift für Christliche Alterthumskunde,* 20, 1906, 189-204.
Kaufmann, C.M.	*Der Menastempel und die Heiligtümer von Karm Abu Mina in der Mariutwüste: Ein Führer durch die Ausgrabungen der Frankfurter Expedition.* Frankfurt: Baer, 1909.
Kaufmann, C.M.	*Zur Ikonographie der Menas-Ampullen mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Funde in der Menasstadt, nebst einem einführenden Kapitel über die neuentdeckten nubischen und aethiopischen Menastexte.* Cairo: Diemer, 1910.
Kaufmann. C.M.	*Die Menasstadt und das National - Heiligtum der altchristlichen Aegypter in der Westalexandrinischen Wüste, Ausgrabungen der Frankfurter Expedition am Karm Abu Mena 1905-1907.* Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1910.
Kaufmann, C.M.	"Menas und Horus-Harpokrates im Lichte der Ausgrabungen in der Menasstadt." *Oriens Christianus,* 1, 1911, 88-102.
Kaufmann, C.M.	"Archaeologische Miszellen aus Aegypten." *Oriens Christianus,* 3, 1913, 105-10, 290-304.

Kaufmann, C.M. "Altchristliche Frauenvotivstatuetten der Menastadt und ihre paganen Vorbilder."
Byzantinisch - Neugriechische Jahrbücher, 2 1921, 303-10.

Kaufmann, C.M. *Die Heilige Stadt der Wüste. Unsere Entdeckungen, Grabungen und Funde in der altchristlichen Menasstadt und weiteren Kreisen in Wort und Bild geschildert.*
Kempt: Kösel und Pustet, 1921.

Keimer, Louis "Quelques détails oubliés ou inconnus sur la vie et les publications de certain voyageurs Européens venus en Egypte pendant les siècles derniers."
Bull. Inst. d'Egypte, XXXI, 1949, 121-173.

Keimer, Louis "Les voyageurs de la langue allemande en Egypte entre 1800 et 1850 ainsi que leurs relations de voyage."
Cahiers d'Histoire Egyptienne, V, March, 1953.

Keimer, Louis "Les Coptes Catholiques à travers les relations de certain voyageurs."
Les Cahiers Coptes, 10, 1956, 13-16.

Keimer, Louis "Les Prosternations pénitentiaires des Moines du Couvent de St. Paul dans le désert de l'Est."
Les Cahiers Coptes, 11, 1956, 21.

Kersting, A.E. "The Coptic Monasteries of Wadi Natrun."
The Bulletin, July 1949, 9-15.

Kirchner - Demecini, E.I. *Oasen der Glückseligkeit.*
Graz: Stiansy Verlag, 1949.

Kopp, Clemens "Aus Vergangenheit und Gegenwart der Koptischen Kirche."
Theologie und Glaube, 21, 1929, 305-15, 482-503.

Labib, Claudius J., *The Book of the Holy Psalmodia.*
Cairo: Ain Shams Print., 1908.

Labib, Pahor "Fouilles du Musée Copte à Saint-Ménas."
Bulletin de l'Institut d'Egypte, 34. 1951-52, 133-138.

Laorty-Hadji *L'Egypte.*
Paris: Belle-Lasalle, 1856.

Lane, Edward William	*The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians.* London: J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1908.
Lane-Poole, Stanley	*Cairo, Sketches of its History, Monuments, and Social Life.* London: S.J. Virtue & Co., 1898.
Lane-Poole, Stanley	*A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages.* London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1901.
Lansing, Gulian	*Egypt's Princes.* A Narrative of Missionary Labour in the Valley of the Nile. Philadelphia: William S. Rentoul, 1864.
Lapie	*Carte Historique, Physique & Positique de l'Egypte.* Paris: Ch. Piquet, 1828.
Larsow, F. (ed.)	*Die Festbriefe des heiligen Athanasius von Alexandrien.* (Klöster der Nitrischen Wüste). Leipzig & Göttingen: Dieterichsche Buchhandlung, 1852.
Leake, W.M.	*Map of Egypt.* London: Arrowsmith, 1818.
Leeder, S.H.	*Modern Sons of the Pharaos.* London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1918.
Leibovitz, Jonas	"Les Monastères de la Thébaide." *Images*, Dec. 17, 1955.
Le Gouz de la Boullaye	*Les Voyages et Observations du Sieur de la Boullaye-le Gouz, etc.* Paris: Gervais Clousier, 1653.
Leroy, Jules	*Moines et Monastères du Proche Orient.* Paris: Horizons de France, 1957.
Letts, Malcolm (transl.),	*The Pilgrimage of Arnold von Harff Knight... in 1496-1499.* London: Thettakluyt Society, 1946.
Leuba, James H.	*The Psychology of Religious Mysticism.* New York: Harcourt & Brace Co., 1929.
Lewis, Agnes Smith	"A visit to the Coptic Monasteries of Egypt." *Cambridge Antiquitarian Society*, 10, 1898-1900, 210-215.
Lewis, Agnes Smith	"Hidden Egypt." *Century Magazine*, 68, 1904, 745-58.
Lewis, Agnes Smith	*The Mythological Acts of the Apostles.* London: C.J. Clay & Sons, 1904.

Liernur, G.A. and Sir C.C. Scott Moncrieff	*Notes on the Wady Rayan.* Cairo: National Printing Office, 1886.
Letter, T.C.	*Le cours entier du grand et fameux Nil la Rivière de l'Egypte dans l'Ecriture Sainte avec la Basse et la Haute Egypte.* Augsburg: Tobie Conrad Lotter, 1720 (?)
Lucas al-Muharraqî	*Bulugh al-Maram fî Hayat Khalifat al-Anbâ Abrâm.* Cairo: Ramsîs, Sh. Fajjalah, 1925.
Ludolph von Suchem	*Description of the Holy Land.* (transl. A Stewart). London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, XII, 1895.
Ludovico Di Varthana	*The Travels of Ludovico di Varthana in Egypt, Syria, Arabia Deserta and Arabia Felix, in Persia, India and Ethiopia, 1503 to 1508,* ed. J.W. Jones. London: The Hakluyt Society, 1863.
McCasland, S. Vernon	*By the Finger of God.* Demon Possession and Exorcism in Early Christianity in the Light of Modern Views of Mental Illness. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1951.
Mackean, W.H.	*Christian Monasticism in Egypt.* London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1920.
MacLean, A.J.	"Syrian Christians." *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics,* XII, 167.
Madden, R.R.	*Travels in Turkey, Egypt, Nubia and Palestine.* 2 vols. London: Henry Colburn, 1829.
Maillet, Benoit de	*Description de l'Egypte.* Paris: Louis Genneau & Jacques Rollin, 1735.
Malan, S.C. (transl.)	*The Divine Liturgy of St. Mark.* London: D. Nutt, 1872.
Malan, S.C. (transl.)	*A short history of the Copts and their Church.* London: D. Nutt, 1873.
Malan, S.C. (transl.)	*The Calendar of the Coptic Church.* London: D. Nutt, 1873.
Marcellino Da Civezza	*Saggio di Bibliografia Sanfrancescana.* Prato: 1879.

Mârî Mînâ Society	*Al-Rahbanah al-Qibtiyah.* Alexandria: Mârî Mînâ Society, 1948.
Marino Sanuto.	*Secrets for True Crusaders to help them to recover the Holy Land.* (transl. A. Stewart). London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, XII, 1280-1350 A.D., 1896.
Martin, Ch.	"Les Monastères du Wadi Natroun." *Nouvelle revue théologique*, 62, 1935, 113-43, 238-52.
Massaia, G.	*I mei 35 anni di missione nell'Alta Ethiopia.* Roma: Tipografia Poliglotta di Propaganda Fide, 1886.
Mazarin et Seguir	"Mission du P. Athanase à Constantinople, en Chypre et au Mont-Athos." in Omont, *Missions Archéologiques Françaises en Orient aux XVII et XVIII siècles,* I, II.
Mazza, Michael	"Une visite à Deir el Moharrak." *Le Progrès Egyptien,* May 11, 1950.
Meinardus, Otto	"Drawn to a Desert." *News Bulletin of the NECC,* 1959, i, 2-6.
Meinardus, Otto	*The Copts in Jerusalem.* Cairo: Commission on Oecumenical Affairs of the See of Alexandria, 1960.
Meinertzhagen, R.	*Nicoll's Birds of Egypt.* 2 vols. London: Hugh Rees Ltd., 1930.
Meyer, Robert	*St. Athanasius : The Life of St. Anthony.* Westminster: The Newman Press, 1950.
Mez, A.	*Die Renaissance des Islams.* Heidelberg: Carl Winters, 1922.
Michalet	*Les Déserts d'Egypte, de Thebaide d'Arabie de Syrie & etc. ou Sont exactement Marquez les Lieux Habitez Parles Les Sainctes Pères des Déserts.* Paris: E. Michalet, 1693.
Middleton, J. Henry	"The Copts and their churches." *The Academy,* 22, 1882, 248--49, 266-67, 285-68, 318.
Miedema, R.	*Koptische Kunst.* Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1929.
Mingana A.	"Vision of Theophilus, or the Book of the Flight of the Holy Family into Egypt." *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library Manchester,* 13, 2, 1929, 383-425.

Mingana A.	*Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts.* 3 vols. Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, Ltd., 1936.
Ministry of Finance	*Almanac 1939.* Cairo: Government Press, 1939.
Minutoli, Heinrich Freiherr von	*Reise zum Tempel des Jupiter Ammon in der Lybischen Wüste.* Berlin: August Rücker, 1824.
Monceaux et Laisné	"Mission de MM. de Monceaux et Laisné voyages de vaillant en Orient (1667-1675)," in Omont, *Missions Archéologiques Françaises en Orient aux XVII et XVIII siècles,* I, 35.
Monk of the Eastern Church	*Orthodox Spirituality.* London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1945.
Monks of Dair as-Surîân	*Sirat al-Anbâ Yuhannis Kame, Tarikh Dair as-Surîân.* Wâdî 'n-Natrûn: Printing Press al-'Adhrâ, 1951.
Moritz, B.	*Beiträge zur Geschichte des Sinaiklosters im Mittelalter nach Arabischen Quellen.* Berlin: Verlag der Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1918.
Morton, H.V.	*Through Lands of the Bible.* London: Methuen & Co., 1938.
Moscatelli, J.	"L'Egypte Chrétienne à désormais sa carte." *Images,* Sept. 3, 1955.
Mosconas, T.D.	"St. Menas Patron of Libyan Desert." *Egyptian Gazette,* Nov. 10, 1942, 2.
Mosharrafa, M.M.	*Cultural Survey of Modern Egypt.* Vol. II. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1948.
Muhammad 'Awdah	"Qasr al-Batârikah fî Misr." *Al-Musawwar,* Oct. 21, 1955.
Muhsin, Hâfiz	"Rihlah ilâ Dair al-Qiddis Antûnîus." *Magallat Shell,* August, 1955.
Munier, H.	"Les Monuments Coptes d'après les Explorations du Père Michel Jullien." *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte,* VI, 1940, 141 f.
Murray, G.W.	"The Christian Settlement at Qattar." *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie d'Egypte,* XXIV, 107-114.

Murray, John
A Handbook for Travellers in Lower and Upper Egypt. 2 vols.
London: John Murray, 1880.

Nassif Fanûs
Al-Qûl al-Yaqîn fî Tarikh al-Abawain al-'Amilain al-Qummus Ishaq Ra'is Dair al-Anbâ Samwîl wa'l-Qummus Ibrâhîm Wakil ad-Dair.
Maghagha: Tâûdrûs, 1939.

Neale, John Mason
A History of the Holy Eastern Church. 2 vols.
London: Joseph Masters, 1847.

"Near the Red Sea, Ancient Desert Convents."
Egypt Travel Magazine, 50, 1958, 13-199.

Nestle, E
"Jacobites."
The New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopaedia, VI, 81-2.

Newett, Margaret
Canon Pietro Casola's Pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the Year 1494.
Manchester: At the University Press, 1907.

Newman, Albert Henry
A Manual of Church History. 2 vols.
Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1901.

Niccolo of Poggibonsi
A Voyage Beyond the Seas. (transl. Bellorini and Hoade).
Jerusalem: Franciscan Press, 1945.

Nigg, Walter
Vom Geheimnis der Mönche.
Zürich & Stuttgart: Artemis Verlag, 1953.

"F.M. Esteves Pereira, Vida de Abba Samuel do mosteiro do Kalamon."
Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 48, 1894, 158-163.

Norden, Frederick Lewis
Travels in Egypt and Nubia. 2 vols.
London: Lockyer Davis & Charles Reymers, 1757.

Nosby, Ibrahim
The Coptic Church: Christianity in Egypt.
Washington: Ruth Sloan Ass., Inc., n.d.

O'Leary, de Lacy
The Saints of Egypt.
New York: The Macmillan Co., 1937.

Omont, Henri
Missions Archéologiques Françaises en Orient aux XVII et XVIII siècles. 2 vols.
Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1902.

Pacho, M.J.R.	*Relation d'un Voyage dans la Marmarique, la Cyrénaïque et les oasis d'Audjelah et de Maradèh.* Paris: Firmin Didot Père et Fils, 1827.
Palladius	*The Paradise or Garden of the Holy Fathers being Histories of the Anchorites Recluses Monks Coenobites and Ascetic Fathers of the Desert of Egypt between 250 and 400 A.D. circiter compiled by Athanasius Archbishop of Alexandria: Palladius Bishop of Helenopolis, St. Jerome and others.* (transl. E.A.W. Budge). London: Chatto & Windus, 1907.
Parry, E.G.	*Some ancient and younger churches in Egypt.* Cairo: S.P.C.K., 1952.
Paul Lucas	*Voyage du Sieur Paul Lucas fait en 1714 par ordre de Louis XIV.* Vol. III. Rouen: Robert Machuei, 1744.
Paulus, H.E.G.	*Sammlung der merkwürdigsten Reisen in den Orient.* 7 vols. Jena: Crist. Cuno's Erben & W. Stahl, 1792.
Pauty, Edmond	"L'Archéologie Copte et l'œuvre du comité de conservation des monuments de l'Art Arabe, de 1933 à 1935." *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte,* VII, 81-86.
Pero Tafur	*Travels and Adventures 1435-1439.* London: George Routledge & Sons, 1926.
Petersen, Theodore	"The Paragraph Mark in Coptic Illuminated Ornament," in *Studies in Art and Literature for Bella da Costa Greene.* ed. D. Miner. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954.
Pereira, F.M. Esteves	*Vida do Abba Samuel do Mosteiro do Kalamon.* Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1894.
Perkins, J.B. Ward	"The Shrine of St. Menas." *British School of Archaeology in Rome,* 17, 1949.
Philostorgius	*The Ecclesiastical History.* (transl. Ed. Wilford.) London: Henry Bohn, 1875.
Piankoff, Alexander	*Two Descriptions by Russian Travellers of the Monasteries of St. Anthony and St. Paul.* Le Caire: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1943.

Piankoff, Alexander	"Thomas Whitemore." *Les Cahiers Coptes*, 7-8, 1954, 19-24.
Piankoff, Alexander	"Les Peintures de la Petite Chapelle au Monastère de Saint Antoine." *Les Cahiers Coptes*, 12, 1956, 7-16.
Piankoff, Alexander	"Deux peintures de Saints Militaires au Monastère de Saint Antoine." *Les Cahiers Coptes*, 10, 1956, 17-25.
Piankoff, Alexander	"Peintures au Monastère de Saint Antoine." *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte*, 14, 1950-1957, 151-163.
Pieper, Karl	*Atlas Orbis Christiani Antiqui.* Düsseldorf: L. Schwann, 1931.
Pietro Della Valle	*Voyages de Pietro della Valle dans la Turquie, l'Egypte, la Palestine, la Perse, etc.* 8 vols. Rouen: Robert Machuel, 1745.
Platt,	*Journal of a Tour through Egypt, the Peninsula of Sinai, and the Holy Land in 1838, 1839.* 2 vols. London: Richard Watts, 1841.
Pococke, Richard	*Carte de l'Egypte et le cours de Nil.* Covens et Mortier, 1746.
Pococke, Richard	*A Description of the East and some other countries.* London: W. Bowyer, 1743.
Polotsky, H.J.	"Suriel der Trompeter." *Le Muséon*, XLIX, 1936, 236 f.
Porphyry	*The Life of Porphyry, Bishop of Gaza.* (transl. by G.F. Hill). Oxford: Clarendon, 1913.
Pratt, Ida A.	*Ancient Egypt.* Sources of Information in the New York Public Library. New York: The New York Public Library 1925.
Protris and Charles-François d'Orleans	*Relation du Voyage du Sayd, ou de la Thebayde.* Microphoto, Deutsches Archaeologisches Institut, Kairo 5125.
Pückler-Muskau	*Aus Mehemed Ali's Reich.* Stuttgart: Hallberger'sche Verlagshandlung, 1844.

Pusey, Edward B.	*The Confessions of St. Augustine.* New York: Pocket Books, Inc., 1951.
Quatremère, M.	*Mémoires Géographiques et Historiques sur l'Egypte.* Paris : F. Schoell, 1811.
Quatremère, M.	*Histoire des Sultans Mamlouks de l'Egypte.* 4 vols. Paris : Firmin Didot Frères, 1845.
Queffelec, Henri	*Saint Anthony of the Desert.* New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1954.
Quibell, Annie	*A Wayfarer in Egypt.* London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1925.
Rabino, M.H.L.	*Le Monastère de Sainte Catherine.* Le Caire: D. Spada, 1938.
Radwan, Loutfi	"Ma'a Ruhban Dair al-Muharraq al-Matrudin." *Al-Ithnain,* March 16, 1947, 665.
Radwan, Loutfi	"Une visite au Monastère d'el Baramous." *La Bourse Egyptienne*, Jan. 18, 1950.
Ray, John	*A Collection of Curious Travels and Voyages.* London: S. Smith & B. Walford, 1693.
Renaudotius, Eusebius	*Historia Patriarcharum Alexandrinorum Jacobitarum ad Marco usque ad finem saeculi XIII.* Paris: Franciscum Fournier, 1713.
Richard, Marcel	"Les Ecrits de Théophile d'Alexandrie." *Le Muséon,* 52, (1939), 33-50.
Richter, Julius	*A History of Protestant Missions in the Near East.* Edinburg: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1910.
Robinson, Forbes	*Coptic Apocryphal Gospels.* Cambridge: The University Press, 1955.
Rocco da Cesinale	*Storia della Missioni dei Cappucini.* Vol. III. Rome: Tipografia Barbera, 1873.
Roger, Eugene	*La Terre Sainte où Description topographique très particulière des Saints Lieux, et de la Terre de Promission.* Paris: Antoine Bertier, 1664.
Rohlfs, Gerhard	*Drei Monate in der libyschen Wüste.* Cassel: Theodor Fischer, 1875.
Röchricht, Reinhold	*Regesta regni Hierosolymitani.* Innsbruck: 1904.

Bombach, Otto	*Aegyptische Reise.* Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags Anstalt, 1957.
Rowlatt, Mary	*A Family in Egypt.* London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1956.
Russegger, Joseph	*Reisen in Europa, Asien und Africa.* 4 vols. Stuttgart: Schweizerbart'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1841-1849.
Russegger, Joseph	*Reisen in Egypten, Nubien und Ost-Sudan.* Stuttgart: Schweizerbart'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1843.
Saint-Génois	*Les Voyageurs Belges du XIIe au XVIIe siècle.* Bruxelles: Ajamar, n.d.
Saint-Génois	*Les Voyageurs Belges du XVIIIe au XIXe siècle.* Bruxelles: Ajamar, n.d.
St. John	*Egypt and Nubia.* London: Chapman & Hall, 1865.
Saint-Maure, Charles de	*Nouveau Voyage de Grèce, d'Egypte, de Palestine, etc. fait en 1721, 1722 et 1723.* La Haye: Pierre Gosse, 1724.
	"Les Saints du Désert Egyptien." *Images*, Dec. 17, 1953.
Sandys, George	*A relation of a journey begun An. Dom. 1610: four books, containing a description of the Turkish Empire, of Egypt, of the Holy Land, of the remote parts of Italy, and islands adjoyning* London: Andrew Crooke, 1637.
Sandys, George	*Sandys Travells.* London: Rob. Clavel, Tho. Passinger, Will. Cadman, 1670.
Sarkis, J.E.	*Bibliographie Arabe.* Cairo: Sarkis Press, 1928.
Savary	*Lettres sur l'Egypte.* 3 vols. Paris: Onfroi, Librairie, 1786.
Sawirus Ibn al-Mukaffa	*History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church.* Vol. II, Part I, II, III. Le Caire: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1943, 1948, 1960.
Sawyer, E.H.	"The first monasteries." *Antiquity*, 4, 1930, 316-26.

Schaff, Philip	*A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church.* Second Series, XIV. Grands Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956.
Schefer, Ch. (ed.)	*Le Voyage de la Saincte Cyté de Hierusalem.* Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1882.
Schefer, Ch. (ed.)	*Le Voyage d'Outremer de Jean Thenaud, 1512.* Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1884.
Schefer, Ch. (ed.)	*Le Voyage de M. d'Aramon, Ambassadeur pour le Roy en Levant, escript par noble homme Jean Chesneau, l'un des secrétaires dudict seigneur Ambassadeur.* Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1887.
Schenk	*Aegypti Recentior descriptio: Aegyptis & Juris, Elchibith; Arabibus, Mesre & Misri; Hebrais, Mitsraim.* Amsterdam: Schenk, *ca.* 1700.
Schlisske, Otto	*Der Schatz im Wüstenkloster.* Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1953.
Schmitz, Alfred Ludwig	"Die Welt der aegyptischen Einsiedler und Mönche." *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde,* 37, 1929, 189-243.
Scholz, Augustin	*Reise in die Gegend zwischen Alexandrien und Paraetonium, die libysche Wüste, Siwa, Aegypten, Palaestina und Syrien in den Jahren 1820 und 1821.* Leipzig: Friedrick Fleischer, 1822.
Schultz, B. Weir	"Christian Antiquities in the Nile Valley, a contribution towards the study of the ancient churches by Somers Clarke." *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology,* I, 1914, 301-3.
Schulz, Stephan	"Reise durch einen Theil von Vorderasien, Aegypten und besonders durch Syrien," in Paulus, *Sammlung,* VI.
Schweinfurth, Georg, August	"Reise in das Depressionsgebiet im Umkreise des Fajum im Januar 1886." *Gesellschaft für Erdkunde, Zeitschrift,* 21, 1886, 96-149.
Schweinfurth, Georg, August	*Auf unbetretenen Wegen in Aegypten.* Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, 1922.

Schwitz, Stephan	"Geschichte und Organisation der pachomischen Klöster im 4. Jahrhundert." *Archiv für katholisches Kirchenrecht*, 81, 3, 5, 1901, 461-90, 630-49.
Seguy, Jean	*Le Monachism Copte.* Le Caire: Institut Copte, 1954.
Sharpe, Samuel	*The History of Egypt.* 2 vols. London: Bell & Daldy, 1870.
Sicard, Claude	*Description de l'Egypte.* Paris: Librairie d'education de Perisse Frères, 1845.
Sicard, Claude	"Brief des Pater Sicard an den P. Fleurian (über) eine Reise in die Wüsten von Thebais und die dortigen Klöster." Paulus, *Sammlung*, V, 126-157.
Sidawi, Elie	"Mœurs et Traditions de l'Egypte moderne, Sitti Dimiana, sa légende, son mouled." *Bulletin de la Société Royale de Géographie d'Egypte*, VIII, 1917, 79-99.
Simaika, Marcus	*The Guide of the Coptic Museum.* Cairo: Government Press, 1932.
Simaika, Marcus	*Dalil al-mathaf al-Qupti wa ahamm al-kana's wa'l-adyra al-'atharia.* Vol. II. Cairo: Government Press, 1932.
Simaika, Marcus	*Catalogue of the Coptic and Arabic Manuscripts in the Coptic Museum, the Principal Churches of Cairo and Alexandria and the Monasteries of Egypt.* 3 vols. Cairo: Government Press, 1939.
Simeon, Scribe Polonais	*Iténeraire, Annales et Mémoires.* transl. from the Armenian by P. Gregoire Guerguerian. *Ms.* 3213. Deutsches Archaeologisches Institut Kairo.
Simon, Jean	"Saint Samuel de Kalamon et monastère dans la litterature Ethiopienne." *Aethiopica*, I, 1933, 36-40.
Simon, Jean	"Le culte des XL martyrs dans l'Egypte chrétienne." *Orientalia*, n.s. 3, 1934, 174-6.

Simon, Jean	"Le monastère Copte de Samuel de Kalamon." *Orientalia christiana periodica*, i, 1935, 52-56.
	Sîrat ash-Shahîda Dimiânah. Maktab al-Mahabah al-Qibtiah al-urthudhuksiah bi'l-Qâhîra, n.d.
Smith, James	*A Pilgrimage to Egypt.* Aberdeen: John Avery, 1897.
Smith, Margaret	*Studies in Early Mysticism in the Near East.* London: The Sheldon Press, 1931.
Smolenski, Thadee	"Le Couvent Copte de Saint Samuel à Galamoun." *Egypt: Service des Antiquités.* Annales 9, 1908, 204-7.
Sobhy, George	"Notes on the Ethnology of the Copts." *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte*, I, 1935, 43-59.
Sobhy, George	"Education in Egypt during the Christian Period and among the Copts." *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte*, IX, 1943, 104-122.
Socrates	*The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates.* London: G. Bell & Sons, 1914.
Somigli, Teodosio	*Il P. Fortunato Vignozzi de Seano O.F.M.* Quaracchi: Tipografia del Collegio di S. Bonaventura, 1913.
Somigli, Teodosio	*Etiopica Francescana*, in Golubovich, *Biblioteca Bio-Bibliografica della Terra Santa...* III. Quaracchi: 1928.
Sonnini de Manoncourt, C.N.S	*Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt.* (transl. H. Hunter). 3 vols. London: Stockdale, 1799.
Sophronius	"Miracula SS. Cyri et Joannis." Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, 87, 3 c. 3596.
Sozomen	*The Ecclesiastical History.* (transl. Ed. Walford). London: Henry Bohn, 1875.
Spiegelberg, Wilhelm	*Koptisches Handwörterbuch.* Heidelberg: Carl Winters, 1921.
Stanley, Arthur P.	*Lectures on the History of the Eastern Church.* London: John Murray, 1889.
Steidle, Basil	*Antonius Magnus Eremita.* Rome: Orbis Catholicus, 1956.

[illegible] — [illegible]
Bielefeld & Leipzig: Velhagen & Klasing, 1904.

[illegible] — "Das Kloster des Heiligen Makarios."
Velhagen & Klasings Monatshefte, 20?, 1905/6, [illegible]

Stock, Eugene — *The History of the Church Missionary Society.* 3 vols.
London: Church Missionary Society, 1899.

Stocker, Otto — *[illegible]* Vegetationsbilder, 18. Reihe.
Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1927.

Stocker, Otto — *Der Wasserhaushalt ägyptischer Wüsten- und Salzpflanzen.*
Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1928.

Strabo — *The Geography of Strabo.* 8 vols.
(transl. H.L. Jones).
London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1932.

Stratton, George M — *Psychology of the Religious Life.*
London: George Allen & Unwin, 1911.

Strothmann, R — *Die Koptische Kirche in der Neuzeit.*
Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1932.

Strzygowski, Joseph — "Der Schmuck der älteren el-Hadrakirche im syrischen Kloster der sketischen Wüste."
Oriens Christianus, I, 1901, 356.

Strzygowski, Joseph — *Koptische Kunst.*
Vienne: Adolf Holzhausen, 1904.

Taeckholm, Vivi — "Report on the Botanical Excursion of the Desert Institute to the Red Sea Coast and the two Galalas in Spring 1956."
Bulletin de l'Institut du Désert d'Égypte, VI, 2, July 1956.

Taylor, Le Baron, Louis Reyband — *La Syrie, l'Égypte, la Palestine et la Judée.* 2 vols.
Paris: Imprimerie de Bourgogne & Martinet, 1839.

[illegible] — "Die Kopten."
Sonntagsbeilage No. 33 zur *Vossischen Zeitung*, 415, Aug. 17, 1913.

[illegible] — *History of the Church from A.D. 322 to A.D. 427.*
London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854.

Thévenot	*The Travels of Monsieur de Thévenot into the Levant.* London: H. Clark, 1637.
Thompson, A.H.	"The Monastic Orders." *The Cambridge Modern History, V,* xx. New York: Macmillan Co., 1902 ff.
Till, Walter	"Koptische Heiligen und Martyrerlegenden." *Orientalia Christiana Analecta,* 102, 1935, 55-71.
Tischendorf, L.F.C.	*Travels in the East.* (transl., W. E. Schuckard). London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1847.
Tousson, Omar	*Etude sur le Wadi Natroun, ses moines et ses couvents.* Alexandrie: Société de Publications Egyptienne, 1931.
Tousson, Omar	*Cellia et ses Couvents.* Alexandrie: Société de Publications Egyptienne, 1935.
Toynbee, Arnold J.	*A Study of History.* (Abridgment by D.C. Somervell). New York: Oxford University Press, 1946.
Tregenza, L.A.	*The Red Sea Mountains of Egypt.* London: Oxford University Press, 1955.
Tyndale, Walter	*An Artist in Egypt.* London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1912.
Vander, Pierre	*L'Egypte, Partie de l'Afrique.* Amsterdam: Covens et Mortier, n.d.
Vaugondy, Robert de	*Partie de l'Egypte Ancienne et Moderne.* Robert de Vaugondy, geographe ordinaire du Roy, 1753.
Veltheim, H. von	"Eremiten des 20. Jahrhunderts in Aegypten." *Die Tat,* June 18, 1959, 12.
Villamont, de	*Les Voyages.* Arras: de la Rivière, 1606.
Villard, Ugo Monneret de	*Les Eglises du Monastère des Syriens au Wadi el Natroun.* Milan: Tipografia Pontificia Arcivescovile San Giuseppe, 1928.
Villard, Ugo Monneret de	"Une Visite à Der el Moharrak." *La Bourse Egyptienne,* June, 14, 1950.

Vitti, A.M.	"S. Familia in Aegypto ubinam iuxta Apocrypha constiterit." *Verbum Domini*, 9, 1929, 3-13.
Vlieger, A. de	*The Origin and Early History of the Coptic Church.* Lausanne: George Bridel & Co., 1900.
	"Voici les Chrétiens d'Egypte." *Images*, Dec. 17, 1955.
Volbach, Wolfgang Friedrich	"Die Koptischen Klöster in der nitrischen Wüste." *Atlantis*, I, 1929, 566-9.
Volney, C.F.	*Voyages en Syrie et en Egypte en 1773-1785*. 2 vols. Paris: Volland et Desenne, 1789.
Wach, Joachim	*Sociology of Religion.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944.
Wadell, Helen	*The Desert Fathers.* London: Constable, 1936.
Wagenmann, Julius	*Entwicklungsstufen des ältesten Mönchtums.* Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1929.
Wallis, John	*A Map of the Mouths of the Nile, with the scene of Action in Egypt.* Taken from Pococke, Norden, Savary, etc. (French invasion of Egypt). London: John Wallis, 1798.
Wansleben, Johann Michael	*Nouvelle Relation en forme de Journal, d'un voyage fait en Egypte en 1672 et 1673.* Paris: Estinenne Michallet, 1677.
Wansleben, Johann Michael	*The Present State of Egypt, or a new Relation of a late voyage into that Kingdom, 1672 and 1673.* London: John Starkey, 1678.
Wansleben, Johann Michael	"Neue Beschreibung einer Reise nach Aegypten in den Jahren 1672-1673." Paulus, *Sammlung*, III, 125-412.
Warner, G.F.	*The Stowe Missal*, 2 vols. London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 1906, 1915.
Warren, William and N.C. Rotschild	"Two New Species of Lepidoptera from the Wady Natroun, Egypt." *The Entomologist*, XXXVI, 484, Sept. 1903, 225-6.
Watson, Andrew	*The American Mission in Egypt, (1854-1896).* Pittsburgh: United Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1904.

Weiland and Kiepert
Die Nilländer oder Aegypten, Nubien und Hebesch.
Weimar: Verlag des Geographischen Instituts, 1846.

Weingarten, H.
"Ursprung des Mönchtums."
Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte, I, 1877, 1 f.

Wiedemann, A.
"Die Menas-Legenden, Ihre volkskundliche und literarische Bedeutung."
Zeitschrift d. Vereins für rheinische Volkskunde, 26.

Wigram, W.A.
An Introduction to the History of the Assyrian Church.
London: S.P.C.K., 1910.

Wilbour, Charles Edwin
Travels in Egypt, December 1880 to May 1891.
Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum, 1936.

Wilkinson, Gardner
Modern Egypt and Thebes: A Description of Egypt. 2 vols.
London: John Murray, 1843.

Wolfson, Harry Austryn
Philo.
Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948.

Worrell, William Hoyt
A short Account of the Copts.
Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1945.

"World's Oldest Monasteries."
Sphinx, May 10, 1947.

Wright, Thomas
Early Travels in Palestine.
London: Henry G. Bohn, 1848.

Wüstenfeld, F.
Maqrizi's Geschichte der Copten.
Göttingen: Dieterichsche Buchhandlung, 1845.

Wüstenfeld, F.
Al-Sinaksari: Synaxarium, das ist Heiligen Kalender der coptischen Kirche aus dem arabischen übersetzt.
Gotha: Perthes, 1879.

Wüstenfeld, F.
Yacut's Geographisches Wörterbuch aus den Handschriften zu Berlin, St. Petersburg und Paris.
Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1924.

Younge, C.D. (transl.)
The Works of Philo Judaeus. 4 vols.
London: George Bell & Sons, 1890.

Zananiri, Gaston — *Trois Anachorètes d'Egypte.*
Le Caire: La Semaine Egyptienne, 1933.

Zatta, Antonio — *L'Egitto Antico e Moderno.*
Venezia: Antonio Zatta e Figli, 1784.

Zittel, Karl A. — *Briefe aus der libyschen Wüste.*
München: R. Oldenbourg, 1875.

Zotenberg, H. — *Chronique de Jean, Evêque de Nikiou.*
Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1883.

Printed by
COSTA TSOUMAS & Co.
CAIRO — U.A.R.

Baptist Seminary of Kentucky
Library

Jerusalem Star

Feb. 9, 19

VISITORS: Dr. Otto F.A. Meinardus, Minister of the Maadi Community Church leads a group of American tourists arriving from Cairo to visit the Holy sites.

Baptist [illegible] of Kentucky
Library

Otto Meinardus

Monks & Monasteries
of the
Egyptian Deserts

Baptist Seminary of Kentucky Library
00004446

The author and Abûnâ Makârî on the keep of Dair as-Suriân.

Dr. Otto F. A. Meinardus is a native of Hamburg, Germany. He received his education at Hamburg University, the University of London, England; Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri (B.D.); Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts (S.T.M., Ph.D.), and Harvard University.

Dr. Meinardus has been the pastor of churches in Christchurch (New Zealand), Adelaide (Australia), and Peabody, Massachusetts. After his arrival in Cairo in 1956 to serve as associate professor of philosophy at the American University at Cairo, he began an intensive first-hand study of the Coptic Church, and Coptic monasticism in particular. He has visited the historic Christian sites throughout Egypt, and has become known among the Copts as one of the foremost Western authorities on the subject. He is a Fellow of the Institute of Coptic Studies in Cairo (F.I.C.S.), where he serves as a lecturer in addition to his work at the American University.

The author is a frequent contributor to the scholarly journals devoted to Coptic studies. He has completed a study of the travels of the Holy Family in Egypt according to oral and written traditions and legends that have been handed down through the centuries, and presently he is engaged in compiling a guide book to ancient and modern Christian Egypt.

Dr. Meinardus, his wife and their two children reside in Ma'adi, a suburb of Cairo, where Dr. Meinardus serves as pastor of the Ma'adi Community Church.